YAŞAR UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAMME

MASTER THESIS

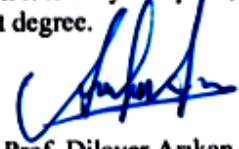# US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY TOWARDS IRAQ: SAVING THE FACE AND CLEANING THE MESS

ARSLAN ASIF SHEIKH
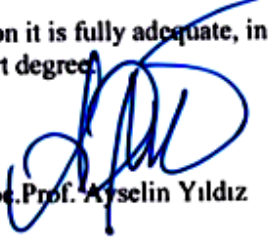
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ABSTRACT
US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY TOWARDS IRAQ:
SAVING THE FACE AND CLEANING THE MESS

Arslan Asif Sheikh

MA, International Relations

Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Dilaver Arıkan Açar

2019

On March 19 2003, the United States, along with coalition forces primarily from the United Kingdom, initiates war on Iraq. Just after explosions began to rock Baghdad, Iraq's capital, US President George W. Bush announced in a televised address, "At this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger." President Bush and his advisors built much of their case for war on the idea that Iraq, under dictator Saddam Hussein, possessed or was in the process of building weapons of mass destruction.

But there were no WMDs found nor was there any direct threat to the United States from Iraq. It became a long and humiliating war for the US and President Bush. Later on, his successor, Barack Obama would enter the White House and pledge that the troops will come back home and signaled a change in US. When the troops left, Iraq went into further turmoil. This study aims to analyze the US foreign policy leading to the Iraq invasion with special emphasis on Obama's Iraq policy and discuss if there were differences or similarities with the Bush era.

Keywords: Foreign Policy Analysis, Iraq, Barack Obama, George W. Bush, War on Terror, Foreign Policy.

ÖZ

ABD BAŞKANI BARAK OBAMA'NIN IRAK'A YÖNELİK DIŞ POLİTİKA STRATEJİSİ: UTANÇTAN KURTARMAK VE KEŞMEKEŞİ TEMİZLEMEK

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2019

19 Mart 2003'te, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, esas olarak Birleşik Krallık'tan gelen koalisyon güçleriyle birlikte Irak'la savaş başlattı. Patlamalar Irak'ın başkenti Bağdat'ı sarsmaya başladıktan hemen sonra ABD Başkanı George W. Bush, "Bu saatte, Amerikan ve koalisyon güçleri Irak'ı silahsızlandırmak, halkını serbest bırakmak dünyayı ciddi tehlikelere karşı savunmak için ve askeri operasyonların erken aşamasındalar." Başkan Bush ve danışmanları savaşı dair savlarını, diktatör Saddam Hüseyin'in yönetimi altındaki Irak'ın kitle imha silahlarına sahip veya inşa etme sürecinde olduğu fikri üzerine inşa ettiler.

Ancak, Irak'ta ne bir kitke imha silahı bulunabildi, ne de ABD'ye Irak'tan doğrudan bir tehdit vardı. ABD ve Başkan Bush için uzun ve aşağılayıcı bir savaş oldu. Daha sonra, halefi Barack Obama Beyaz Saray'a geldi ve askerlerin eve döneceğine söz verdi. Birlikler ayrıldığında, Irak daha fazla kargaşaya girdi.. Bu çalışmada, Obama'nın Irak politikasına özel vurgu yaparak Irak'ın işgaline yol açan ABD dış politikasının analiz edilmesi ve Bush dönemi ile benzerlikler ve farklılıklarının tartışılması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Dış Politika Analizi, Irak, Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Teröre Karşı Savaş, Dış Politika.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TEXT OF OATH

I declare and honestly confirm that my study, titled "US President Barack Obama's Foreign Policy Strategy towards Iraq: Saving the Face and Cleaning the Mess" and presented as a Master's Thesis, has been written without applying to any assistance inconsistent with scientific ethics and traditions. I declare, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that all content and ideas drawn directly or indirectly from external sources are indicated in the text and listed in the list of references.

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Arslan Asif Sheikh

Signature

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February 19, 2019

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACA   : Affordable Care Act

ACLU   : American Civil Liberties Union

ACU   : American Conservative Union

ADA   : Americans for Democratic Action

AIPAC   : American Israel Public Affairs Committee

CIA   : Central Intelligence Agency

DHS   : Department of Homeland Security

DIA   : Defense Intelligence Agency

EU   : European Union

FPA   : Foreign Policy Analysis

FSA   : Free Syrian Army

IAEA   : International Atomic Energy Agency

IMF   : International Monetary Fund

IR   : International Relations

ISA   : Offices of International Security Affairs

ISIS   : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

ISP   : Office of International Security Policy

JCS   : Joint Chief of Staffs

NATO   : North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NSC   : National Security Council

OSD   : Office of the Secretary of Defense

SoFA   : Status of Forces Agreement

UCAV   : Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle

UN   : United Nations

US   : United States

USAID   : United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

The aim of the study is to analyze the foreign policy strategy of President Obama towards Iraq. The argument is to ascertain whether the decision of pulling out the troops from Iraq specifically the leader's decision or was it made by the other foreign policy actors. The motive behind this study is the poor condition of Iraq and analyzing the US government's role in it. In this context, the study aims to focus on the US and the different patterns of US foreign policy, starting with its inception and emergence of American exceptionalism to "pre-emptive" invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Whenever there is campaigning for a high post, there are always promises made by the candidates while criticizing the previous head of the post. The presidency for the United States has the same story in that all the candidates are heavily critical of the outgoing President while assuring his prospective voters that if he/she is the best person for the job at the moment as he/she has the best plans for the future. Barack Obama, although did the exact same thing, but there was more hope from him as his predecessor, George W. Bush, is one of the most criticized President in US history and has been condemned by wide variety of people for his policies. This is why many expected that after becoming President of the United States, Barack Obama would employ a fresh policy completely different from what was during the Bush era as his basic strategy was to lobby for the rejection of Bush's policy and show the people that there will be a fresh policy to be pursued. We will analyze how successful Obama was in moving away from Bush administration's policies.

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY

The study will utilize two Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) approaches, Rational Actor model and Bureaucratic Politics model. Rational actor model assumes that the main actor in foreign policy is a rational individual who can be relied on to make informed, calculated decisions that maximize value and perceived benefits to the state. The rational actor model relies on individual state-level interactions between nations and government behaviour as units of analysis; it assumes the availability of complete information to policymakers for optimized decision making, and that actions taken throughout time are both consistent and coherent. There are four main steps in the rational actor's decision-making process: identify the problem, define desired outcomes, evaluate the consequences of potential policy choices and finally, make the most rational decision to maximize beneficial outcomes.

The rational actor theoretical approach can be useful to understanding the goals and intentions behind a foreign policy action. However, critics of this model believe it does not account for instances when complete information may not be available, as well as the relatively subjective concept of rationality or factors that might inhibit rational decision making. The bureaucratic politics model analyses decisions on the premise that actions are taken by a number of independent, competing entities within a particular state. Each of these separate entities brings values to the decision-making process, as well as its own view of what's best for personal, organizational and national interests. Each party attempts to satisfy its goals, meaning any collective action is contingent upon successful negotiations and the arrival at an ultimate consensus between all entities.

A number of factors can influence each party's decision making and how it achieves its goals, such as the relative power and degree of influence of each other actor in the group. Each party has opposing viewpoints and desired outcomes related to an array of issues, and success in achieving certain goals may require other parties to make certain concessions, resulting in decisions that are often seen as more beneficial to one side than the others. Additional factors that impact decision making include the degrees of importance of certain goals and the political values each party represents. The increasingly partisan nature of US politics provides an excellent example of this model in action. The bureaucratic politics approach is often touted as

an explanation as to why states sometimes act irrationally. However, some argue the model doesn't account enough for highly concentrated power held by certain entities, such as the executive branch in US governance. It is also seen as very US-centric and difficult to apply in the context of other styles of government.

1.1. Structure of the study

Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical approach towards Foreign Policy Analysis. Also, it will discuss the Foreign policy actors in US foreign policy making and their effect on US policy. Chapter 3 will analyse the evolution of US foreign policy since its inception till the tenure of George W. Bush with special focus on the Iraq War. Chapter 4 discuss the arrival of Barack Obama to presidency and analyses his policy regarding Iraq and its consequences. Also, Chapter 4 talks about whether he moved away from his predecessor's policies or continued them. Chapter 5 discusses other foreign policy initiatives taken by Obama so that some attention is diverted away from Iraq. In addition, the chapter will also look at some of his domestic policy initiatives and some of the problems he faced while in power. Finally, we will analyse how similar or different the Obama and Bush era was in terms of their dealing with Iraq.

CHAPTER 2: FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS APPROACH: WHO MAKES US FOREIGN POLICY?

The study of Foreign policy is different from other disciplines of International Relations in a number of ways. It focuses on international as well as domestic issues, while the level of analysis varies from the individual level to state or systematic level. All these aspects are integrated in the study of foreign policy. According to Christopher Hill, foreign policy can be defined as "the sum of external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually but not exclusively a state) in international relations" (Hill, 2016). According to White, foreign policy can be defined as "government activity con- ducted with relationships between state and other actors, particularly other states, in the international system" (White, 1989). Yet, as White admits, this definition does not include other forms of collective actors like the EU that also conduct foreign policy activities. Rosenau offers an even simpler definition of it as the external behavior of states (Rosenau, 1971). Brecher contends that what we should study are foreign policy decisions and not just measurable behavior (Brecher, 1972).

Nowadays, the study of foreign policy is quite diverse, as more and more new voices enter the field and combine their efforts to constantly understand and explain foreign policy. The main goal of the analysis of foreign policy are the intentions, declarations and actions of the actor, often, but not always, the state-directed actions towards the outside world and the reaction of other entities to these intentions, declarations and actions (Neack *et al.*, 1995). In the contemporary world, it is hard for political leaders to steer the ship of state without both an internal compass to define the state's destination and a map to mark the locations of others and relevant geopolitical features of the environment (Walker and Malici, 2007). Foreign policy mistakes and fiascos can occur when states collide as leaders decide how to navigate the treacherous waters of world politics (Tuchman 1984; Neustadt and May 1986). This problem becomes acute during international crises – turning points in world politics – when at least two states collide and perhaps threaten their mutual existence. In a world of nuclear weapons, a collision may also threaten their neighbors and even the entire planet.

The collision between the United States and the Soviet Union in the October

1962 Cuban missile crisis signaled more than 50 years ago that the possibility of a regional or global confrontation is real in the nuclear age. While the end of the Cold War brought the era of superpower confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union to a close, the capacity for a cataclysmic collision is greater today from the proliferation of nuclear weapons to tense competition of regional powers in East and South Asia and the Middle East. American President John F. Kennedy and Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev were able to steer their respective states away from a nuclear disaster in 1962; however, it is also possible for US, Russia, and China to confront one another again with the capacity to do more damage than was possible with previous generations of nuclear weapons.

The new leaders of these large states and their smaller, regional allies may not be so fortunate as Kennedy and Khrushchev in being able to steer their respective ships of state successfully through such crises with adversaries. There are also new challenges posed in today's world by the less catastrophic but no less significant threats from severe economic dislocations, terrorist attacks with weapons of mass destruction, and ecological hazards associated with the processes of globalization, cultural rifts, and natural disasters. In order to prevent or manage them, states and their leaders involved in these events need to be able to diagnose the actions of others and make choices that lead to beneficial outcomes both for themselves and their neighbors. (Walker *et al.*, 2011)

Foreign policy analysis is defined as the study of the behavior and practice of relation between different actors in the international system. Generally, states are the primary actors in FPA and within the state other factors are also analyzed such as the decision makers, circumstances and procedures which affect the foreign policy outcomes. FPA does not only focus on the decision makers specifically, but gives equal importance to sub-state sources (Alden and Aran, 2016). In the case of United States, even though it seems that the President wields the control over foreign policy, however, in reality that is not entirely the case. The Executive has to share the responsibility in conducting foreign relations with other branches of government such as the Congress, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, and in some cases strong interest groups which would be explained further in this chapter.

In the International Relation discipline, FPA has evolved into a separate field of study as it focuses specifically on the behaviour and sources of decisions of the state (Alden and Aran, 2016). Focusing on the processes behind formulating of foreign policy decisions instead of the outcomes of those decisions provides the researcher a more complete analysis. If an IR approach were to be applied on the same matter, it would give an answer which would be limited to the scope of respective theory. Applying FPA would provide better decision making ability to states, thereby improving the probability of peace among them.

Foreign policy analyses can be descriptive, evaluative, or analytical. Descriptive studies establish the facts regarding foreign policy decisions, policies declared publicly, actions taken, and the official and de facto relationships among state and non-state international actors. Foreign policy evaluation considers the consequences of foreign policy actions and assesses whether the goals were desirable and if they were achieved. Analytical study is concerned with the societal, governmental, and individual inputs that affect foreign policy choice.

2.1. Power sharing in the decision making process

The foreign policy of the United States of America has been based on the countries national interests. As the national interest has changed over the years, so has the foreign policy. In its infancy, sustaining its independence against its stronger European counterparts, such as Great Britain and Spain, was the primary national interest. The main foreign policy goal at the time was to put an end to further colonisation of the western hemisphere by the European powers and any new involvement of theirs, which was evident in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. America evaded foreign conflicts and focused more on nation building during the 19th century and went in search of market and colonies only when it began to flourish following industrialisation (America's Foreign Policy, n.d.).

The US first got entangled in European matters during World War I but quickly went back into isolationism after the war ended. It even helped create the League of Nations but refused its membership soon after. The ever increasing military might of the US took a hit following the Great Depression in the 1930s and so was not ready for another great war when its fleet at Pearl Harbour was attacked by the Japanese in 1941. Yet it was the only country left standing stronger in the

aftermath of the end of the World War II. But this time it altered its foreign policy by taking a more global role in world affairs. It was the main actor in the founding of the United Nations as well as bringing back the war-torn European nations on their feet by investing billions of dollars through the Marshall Plan. Also it was responsible for creating a system of alliances, most notably the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

The Cold War followed, where the United States contested against the Soviet Union along with their respected allies on all fronts. The US competed militarily, economically and ideologically against the Soviets (McCormick, 2010). This led to creation of massive armies and vast stockpiles of conventional and nuclear weapons but the superpowers never initiated direct war. The United States formed the policy of 'containment' against the Soviet Union which also meant fighting Soviet influence in other regions (Kenan, 1946). This policy steered the US towards the Korean and Vietnam wars which proved to be bloody. However, when the Soviet Union disintegrated due to economic exhaustion, the Cold War ended which left the United States as the sole superpower of the world.

In the contemporary world, the foreign policy of the United States encompasses wide-ranging array of matters and functions which consists of namely:
  i.   Developing and upholding diplomatic relations with other countries and organisations such as the United Nations.
  ii.   Performing the role of peacekeeper to maintain security regionally and internationally with the help of partners.
  iii. Playing the role of a leader in resolving conflicts in the different regions by negotiating treaties and agreements between parties.
  iv.   Overseeing a variety of social and economic issues.
  v.   Providing disaster relief and foreign aid to developing countries (America's Foreign Policy, n.d.).

In this part, the main entities behind foreign policy decision making and the evolution of US interests over the years will be discussed. The reasons behind US war on terror as well as the difference between the military invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq will also be elaborated. The primary aspect of FPA is to analyse the decision making processes of state foreign policy, which puts a special emphasis on the actors

which shape those decisions. In this context, the different actors on state foreign policy decision making will be discussed as well.

2.2. Leaders

Individuals who have power and authority generally have to make important decisions. The rationale behind those important decisions could be understood by studying those individuals or leaders and their style of leadership. Studying them also assists in understanding the process of decision making and reasons why other alternatives couldn't be taken. According to Margaret Hermann et al. (2001), there are two types of leaders, "goal-driven", also known as "task-oriented", or "context-driven". Task-oriented leaders generally stand by their ideology or position and do not accept change from that position in the face of international pressure, going through without support. Those people are appointed whose ideas are according to the ideology of the executive. An example of this was President George W. Bush, who at the time of lobbying for the invasion of Iraq in 2003, faced disapproval from the UN and later on from Congress and the American public but still went ahead with the plan (Hermann *et* al., 2001).

Compared to goal-driven leaders, context-driven are able to shape their position and ideals according to the context of the situation at hand. The personnel selected not based on loyalties but according to the merits of the position and there are discussions and consultations among the leadership group. On the international level, these leaders will focus more on making consensus and partnerships. Obama is regarded to be a highly deliberative and careful president who contrasts favourably not only with Bush, but also with other predecessors who were caught in difficult wars, such as Lyndon Johnson during Vietnam. According to James T. Kloppenberg, Obama exhibits a philosophical pragmatism that "embraces uncertainty, provisionality, and the continuous testing of hypotheses through experimentation". Obama's style might frustrate those who seek quick decisions, but it appeals to others who consider him willing to listen to alternative viewpoints before then acting decisively once he has considered all options (Kloppenberg, 2012).

According to Margaret Hermann (Margaret Hermann *et al*., 2001), in order to identify a leader as context-oriented or task-oriented the following points have to be considered:

i. Does he/she accept political limitations?

ii. Is the leader prepared to receive new information?

iii. Is the leader attentive to the problem or more focused on relationships?

Leaders react differently to political constraints. For example, democratic leaders are expected to be more structurally restricted by legislative bodies, the press, public opinion and opposition parties. Authoritarian rulers encounter several restrictions of this kind. But even in democracies there is a difference. In general, goal-oriented leaders are more likely to challenge constraints, while those who are context-oriented will act within constraints. Working within limits means creating coalition, understanding, compassion towards voters and involvement of all parties. The willingness to receive new information is also important at the individual level. Task-oriented leaders are less open to new information, while context-oriented leaders actively seek information (Neack, 2008).

2.2.1. The President – Executive Branch of Government

According to the United States Constitution, the power to form foreign policy has been given to both the executive and legislative branches of the government. Both branches have been delegated specific powers but are also directed to work together in certain circumstances and sharing the responsibility. This was done so that both the President and the Congress can check each other's actions just like they do while formulating domestic policy. However, throughout US history, there has been confusion regarding the division of power which has led to political disputes on some occasions (McCormick, 2010).

Article II of the US constitution gives the President the following powers:

i. Complete power to be the Chief Executive of the country which also includes the area of foreign policy,

ii. Power to direct the armed forces.

iii. Power to be the topmost diplomat and principal negotiator.

In summary, the President performs three major roles. He is the commander-in-chief, chief diplomat and the chief executive, which gives him significant power and influence in formulating foreign policy. However, the executive did not have so much power at the beginning. Before 1787, the Congress was responsible for

formulating foreign policy through its Committee on Foreign Affairs but this was considered to be inefficient. The Congress was unable to uphold and preserve America's national boundaries as well as having difficulties in handling trade and dealing with the Spanish and the British. This led to the holding of the Constitution Convention by the founders of America where they decided that the President should be given more influence and power. They also decided that the President would share this power with the Congress during war and peace as well as making appointments and forming treaties (Fisher and Silverstein, 1995).

2.3. Advisors and Bureaucracies

The discussion of the advisory system has thus far largely focused on instances where there is a single leader with substantial control over the design of the advisory system. Depending on the political system of a specific society, the leader may have more or less leeway in structuring the advisory system and choosing his or her advisors. The more a leader has the ability to place his or her stamp on the organization of the executive, the more his or her personality will affect the organizational structure. In a presidential system of a democratic government, for instance, the executive branch of government is separate from the legislative branch (Breuning, 2007). The president is elected independently and does not owe his or her position to the support of the legislature, although a troubled relationship with the legislature can render policy making difficult.

In a presidential system of government, like in the US, the president usually has substantial freedom in organizing the executive to suit his or her decision making style, just as he or she has great autonomy in the selection of her or his advisors. In a parliamentary system, on the other hand, the prime minister owes his or her position directly to the support of the legislature. If the legislature withdraws its support, for instance through a vote of no confidence, the prime minister is forced to resign. In a parliamentary system, the composition of the executive is less clearly determined by a single individual, depending in part on the electoral system of the country. In cases where a single party tends to win a parliamentary majority, a prime minister may have a greater influence over the composition of government and the advisory system, thus has a wider authority over the foreign policy making of the country.

In cases where governments are composed of several political parties, such as

in a coalition government, the advisory system as a whole is less likely to be structured to suit a single personality. Rather, each member of the executive structures only a small circle of advisors in the department over which he or she presides. A cabinet government is a group of ministers who jointly constitute the executive of a country. They usually have collective responsibility, which means that each minister is expected to publicly support all cabinet decisions including foreign policy decisions. Personal disagreements with collective decisions may not be voiced publicly. When the cabinet is made up of a coalition of political parties, meaning that two or more political parties jointly form the government, the collective responsibility for political decision making is borne by ministers who are affiliated with different political parties and have different political views and priorities. The significance of the structure of the advisory system derives not only from the fact that it is often a function of the leader's personality, but also from its implications for the decision making process.

2.3.1 The Congress – Legislative Branch of Government

On the side of the foreign policy spectrum lays the US Congress which has considerable control over its formulation. It is divided into two bodies, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each of the 50 state receives two seats in the Senate while the number of seats in the House depends on the size of the population of each state. Both institutions have equal as well as different duties to perform in the government (Two Bodies, One Branch, n.d.). According to Article I of the Constitution, Congress has the following powers:

i. To formulate or amend any law and to assign funds for it.
ii. To declare war on another country
iii. To provide for the national defence in order to nurture and maintain its armies.
iv. And to coordinate international commerce.

According to Louis Henkin, the Congress has more influence over foreign affairs because of the fact that United States is a strong sovereign country, thereby giving it the control over the formulation and regulation of the foreign policy (Henkin, 1987). Congress can also interfere in other government matters such as extraditions of citizens to their respective countries, endorsement of international

obligations and the management of aliens. Even though the president and Congress were assigned separate foreign policy powers, there are also certain areas where both parties share responsibility. For example, even though the president is the chief executive of the country who commands the armed forces and can negotiate treaties, the Congress is the one which formulates the laws to be imposed, decides whether to start a war and provides its approval to treaties.

It is in this area of shared responsibility where the executive and legislative branch clash with each other. Over the years this has led one branch over powering the other, like an arm wrestling for influence. On some occasions the president is in control, while on other occasions the Congress takes over a more dominant role in foreign policy making. During the early years of the United States, George Washington, as the president was in complete control of foreign affairs and made several decisions himself such as announcing a neutral position during the conflict between France and Britain, not disclosing information on treaties as well as appointing ambassadors without consultation. This pattern was followed by some future presidents as well, as was in the case of the famous Monroe Doctrine (McCormick, 2010).

Congress slowly gained control over affairs following the civil war but was again over taken with the start of World Wars I and II and the Cold War giving the president more influence over foreign affairs. It was only due to the increasing public unrest due to the prolonged Vietnam War that the Congress claimed back some of its lost control. The flawed decision made by the executive branch in the case of Vietnam as well as the emergence of the Watergate scandal put the presidency under a lot of pressure and also gave the Congress a chance to make it more compliant in the future. For this purpose, the Congress passed a number of important legislations such as the Case-Zablocki Act and the War Powers Resolution. The Case-Zablocki Act was passed on 1972 and according to this law; the President became bound to notify the Congress about any agreement within 60 days of its coming into force (McCormick and Johnson, 1977).

The War Powers Resolution was passed in 1973, in retaliation to the non-compliance of the Nixon administration during the Vietnam War. Before that in 1970, the Congress repealed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which gave the president

complete control over the conduct of the war in Vietnam (Congress and the Nation, 1973). However, this move was ignored by President Nixon which led to the War Powers Resolution. The resolution consisted of the following stipulations:

i. The President could direct armed forces either in the case of war, a national emergency due to any attack on the United States or a specific constitutional permission.

ii. The President would consult Congress before directing forces and Congress would remain involved until the forces are called back.

iii. If the President deploys forces without the declaration of war, then he must submit a written report within 48 hours to the speaker of the House and the majority leader of the Senate.

iv. Unless there is a declaration of war, the President cannot utilise US forces more than 60 days.

v. Congress would have the authority to call back American forces before the completion of the 60-day limit.

It could be seen that these stipulations clearly focus on curtailing the powers of the president in relation to deploying American forces to prevent another mistake like Vietnam in the future. The main purpose of the resolution was to make sure the executive thinks twice before taking a decision. Even in the presence of such legislations, there were conflicts between the two branches (McCormick, 2010). Firstly, in August 1990, then President George H. W. Bush informed the Congress that he had decided to deploy American forces in Saudi Arabia to protect it from Iraq during the Gulf War without complying with the War Powers Resolution. Interestingly, the Congress only raised its voice when President Bush announced its decision to enlarge the American presence in the Gulf region in November 1990. Bush finally gave in to the pressures and in January 1991 he requested permission from the Congress which he succeeded in getting.

Another instance of conflict was the deployment of American forces in Bosnia. In 1995 President Bill Clinton decided to utilise American Air Force as part of the NATO response to the Bosnian Serb's attack on Sarajevo which also angered the Congress. Even though the Congress was against the policy employed by Clinton, it was unable to withdraw its support due to public pressure. The September

11 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre led the Congress and then President George W. Bush to cooperate among them. P.L. 107-40 and P.L. 107-243 were passed by Congress. The former gave the President the power to use force against anyone who he determines to have formulated or assisted the terrorist attacks. The latter was passed in October 2002 in relation to Iraq which allowed the president to utilise the armed forces to defend the country against Iraqi threats and to implement all UN Security Council resolutions against Iraq. Although these legislations were as a result of cooperation between the presidency and the Congress, however, they transferred the more of the foreign policy making powers back to the executive and decreased the role of Congress in foreign affairs (McCormick, 2010).

Although the executive and legislative branches of the government seems to have a control over foreign affairs, in the background there are a number of government institutions – the departments and non-governmental actors which also have different roles and a say in the formulation of the foreign policy. These are the Department of State, Department of Defence, interest groups, media and public opinion.

2.3.2. Department of State

The US Department of State was established in 1781 originally as the Department of Foreign Affairs. It became the Department of State in 1789 and is considered as the regional foreign policy bureaucracy and the oldest cabinet post (Department of State Completes 200 Years, 1982). Over the years the department has increased in size as well as in its various functions. Its main purpose is to assist the US President in formulating and implementing America's foreign policy. However, its influence has decreased with the passage of time (McCormick, 2010). The US Secretary of State heads the organisational structure of the Department of State and is the primary advisor to the US President concerning foreign policy matters. He or she is responsible for supervising, coordinating and directing US foreign policy objectives and government actions overseas (Secretary of State, n.d.).

After the Secretary of State comes the Deputy Secretary of State and the Office of Secretary. The Deputy Secretary reports directly to the Secretary of State while the Office of the Secretary is responsible for managing the schedule for him or her (Department Organisation, n.d.). The undersecretaries are included in the second

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level of authority and act as the primary advisors for foreign policy to the Secretary. During the time of President Clinton, the number and role of undersecretaries grew to enhance their role in the policy making process (Baker, 1995). There are divisions of undersecretaries which are mainly responsible to handle the primary matters such as coordinating bureaus which come under them and also serve as a cooperate board to the secretary of state (Department Organisation, n.d.). The three main divisions are namely:

i.   The Undersecretary of Political Affairs
ii.   The Undersecretary for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs
iii. The Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Affairs

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Office of the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations are also connected with the Department of State. The Clinton government was responsible for the introduction of the position of Office of the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations so that there could be better communication and coordination between the Bureau of International Organisation Affairs in the State Department and America's ambassador to the UN. The US government also carries out foreign bureaucracy mainly through the US Agency for International Development which was established in 1961. The main objectives of the USAID are to continue the foreign policy targets of the US government and to support long term and reasonable economic growth as well as providing aid to those countries which participate in democratic transformations, battling poverty or suffering from disaster (USAID, 2008). Although it is considered an independent body the Secretary of State provides it with foreign policy direction.

The biggest challenge faced by the Department of State is its rapport with Secretary of State and the president (McCormick, 2010). The influence of department has been on the decrease since World War II, due to the fact that presidents and in some cases the Secretary of State not giving importance to their recommendations. Instead advisors were given more importance or the president going by his own ideas. Also over the years, the relationship between the president and Secretary of State has also been a concern. In the case of President Richard Nixon, his National Security Advisor at the time, Henry Kissinger took centre stage

in foreign policy formation instead of William Rogers who was the Secretary of State at that time similarly, during President Ronald Reagan's tenure. In some periods of US foreign relations, the Secretararies of State was eclipsed by the National Security Advisors (Smith, 2012).

During the George W. Bush's presidency, it was thought that Secretary of State Colin Powell would be the primary source for foreign policy recommendations. However, it wasn't the case as his recommendations especially in the case of Iraq and North Korea were ignored by the president (Perlez, 2001). It was only after September 11 that he came into prominence and took on a larger role as part of the Bush administration. Even then he had to compete with Condoleezza Rice who was the National Security Advisor and had the trust of Bush, as well as the then Vice President Dick Cheney and the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld who had a far bigger influence on foreign policy matters (DeYoung and Mufson, 2001). This shows that even though the Secretary of State may be responsible for formulating foreign policy, it is not necessary that the president would be listening to that advice.

2.3.3. Department of Defense

It is generally perceived that the Department of State is only responsible for executing defence policy; however, it plays a significant role in the formulation of security policy of the US as well. Over the years since the foundation of the US, as the influence of the Department of State has relatively decreased, the influence of the Department of Defense has increased and is now considered as one of the primary policy contributor to the US policies (Lieberson, 1971). In some cases it also overtakes other departments in the executive branch of foreign policy, displaying a pervasive role (Yarmolinsky, 1971). Its increased influence is aided by its significant size and scope with the presence of several divisions which are divided into numerous departments. It has an influence on the people of America as the military employs a large number of people, generates jobs for US corporations at home and abroad and awards defense contracts.

The Department of Defense has three main sectors namely:
  i.   The Secretary of Defense;
  ii.   The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS); and
  iii. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD).

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Among these the OSD is more recent but also plays a pivotal role in foreign policy formulation. Its main duties are to develop evaluation mechanisms for supervision and execution of policy, provide oversight for efficient resource distribution and administration and to formulate policies which are in line with the national security objectives of the United States (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2008). The Undersecretary of Defense and a principal assistant are in charge of the policy division of OSD, which consists of numerous policy offices headed by assistant secretary of state which are also key. These include Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, Global Security Affairs, International Security Affairs, Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, and Asian and Pacific Security Affairs.

The offices of International Security Affairs (ISA) and Global Security Affairs which was formerly known as Office of International Security Policy (ISP) carry special importance. The ISA is responsible for formulating strategy and security policy for international organisations and states in Africa, Middle East and Europe. It also acts on behalf of secretary of defense and the undersecretary of defense as a participant in international negotiations and was also a major source of foreign policy during the Vietnam War (Hoopes, 1987). The ISP is responsible for European and NATO affairs which includes conventional and nuclear forces as well as issues related to nuclear proliferation (McCormick, 2010). The undersecretary at the time of September 11 attacks; Douglas Feith formed an intelligence team which would evaluate the possibility of any terrorist associations of Iraq with other countries. Later, he was also behind the formation of a special planning team in October of the following year which had to task to make necessary arrangements in case of war in Iraq. Both teams had significant influence on the Iraq policy and became controversial because of the fact that even the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) were doubtful about the findings of the intelligence report about where they concluded that there were links between Al-Qaeda and Iraq but still it was followed through by the government (Schmitt, 2003). This showed how much value was given to the recommendations from the Department of Defense.

Followed by the OSD, the second set of policy advisors are the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) which is also considered a hinge between the military and senior

civilian leadership (Amos and Taylor, 1984). Its main duty is to present strategic planning to the secretary of defense and president as well as coordinating the utilisation of arm forces when required. Also it proposes the requirements for the United States military to the Secretary of Defence and president and the framework on how to meet these requirements. The JCS consists of a vice-chairman and chairman, the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Air Force, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The president appoints the chairman of joint chiefs with the consent of the Senate. The chairman is the principal military advisor to the president, the National Security Council and the Secretary of Defense. However, the influence of Joint Chief of Staff is regarded to be in the decline since World War II, with the civilian side having more sway due to two major reasons. Firstly, since 1947 the JCS have experienced a mixed relationship with their respective Secretary of Defence and president (Korb, 1979). Secondly, each member of the JCS is responsible for their service as well as being the advisor to the secretary of defence and president which limits their overall impact because they are more focused towards their services (Korb, 1974).

The JCS is followed by the Secretary of Defence who is the third policy advisor. The role of Secretary of Defence in formulating policy has significantly improved since the World War II due to the fact that they enjoyed more trust from the president (McCormick, 2010). An example of this was seen in the case of Robert McNamara who was considered as the Secretary of Defense having the most influence in policy formation than any other officer of the cabinet. He held the post during the tenures of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, developing a close relation with the both. He was also responsible for developing the defense strategy for NATO and the nuclear strategy towards the Soviet Union.

Another Secretary of Defense who enjoyed similar trust from the president was Donald Rumsfeld during the George W. Bush era. He took centre stage in policy making along with the military and became the primary driver of US foreign policy following September 11 (Woodward, 2002). He was the focal person on making policy regarding the response to be given to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and held numerous press conferences to explain and defend the actions taken. He was also the first person to discuss war in Iraq with President Bush and later took on an even more important role in the beginning and during the war in Iraq

and even overruled the military's advice over operational and tactical processes (McCormick, 2010).

2.3.4. National Security Council

Similar to the Department of Defense, the role of the National Security Council has had a significant increase in forming foreign policy. Initially it was established as a small agency which had the duty of managing policy but now has evolved as a separate bureaucratic body having a major foreign policy role. The National Security Advisor heads the National Security Council and on some occasions his or her advice takes precedence over the Secretaries of Defense and State (McCormick, 2010). The National Security Council was originally responsible for managing policy decisions between the foreign affairs bureaucracy. According to the National Security Act of 1947 the president heads the council and members consisted of the Secretary of Defence, Secretary of State and vice president with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Central Intelligence performing an advisory role (National Security Council, n.d.). But now the NSC has enlarged on a great scale consisting of numerous interdepartmental committees. The position of the national security advisor has become so important because he or she performs several important roles. The advisor is responsible for:

i.   Managing the policy making programs in the NSC;
ii. Interacting with officials from different countries;
iii. Making sure the policy of the president is executed;
iv. Explaining and defending government policy to the public (Turner, 1985).

Initially the NSC was used as a coordinating body by earlier presidents such as Eisenhower and Truman, due to the presence of formidable Secretaries of State. The meetings of the National Security Council at the time were mainly limited to an exchange of ideas. It was during the time of President Kennedy when the role of NSC gained importance and the first national security advisor was appointed. That role was given to McGeorge Bundy who was considered a more significant voice in formulating policy as well as receiving numerous staff responsibilities (Richelson, 2018). Of all the national security advisors, the most prominent was considered to be Henry A. Kissinger who was appointed by Richard Nixon. Henry Kissinger had significant policy making powers and by using those powers he reorganised the

mechanism of decision making of the bureaucracy which gave the NSC a much larger role in formulating policy.

After Henry Kissinger, the next most influential national security advisor was considered to be Condoleezza Rice who was appointed by George W. Bush. It was initially thought that Colin Powell, who was the Secretary of State at the time, would have more influence on policy formation due to his vast experience being part of previous governments in the form of National Security Advisor and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, he was eclipsed by Condoleezza Rice because she had the trust of President Bush and she had also previously served under George H. W. Bush as part of the NSC staff. In the case of China, North Korea and United States' role in the Middle East recommendations that were provided by Condoleezza Rice had preference over the views of the Secretary of State as the president felt more comfortable to work and consult with her (McCormick, 2010). However, that changed after September 11 and the Secretaries of Defense and State, Rumsfeld and Powell took a more central role over the policy regarding Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Still, on other issues such as Iraq and national missile defense, Rice retained her hold and was the main policy maker.

2.4. Factors Affecting Foreign Policy

Along with the foreign policy actors, the factors which effect foreign policy have an equally important status in FPA. Those factors will be analysed in the following part.

2.4.1. International Politics

Foreign policy decisions are typically made in a strategic setting. Thus, behaviour of adversaries and allies affects foreign policy decisions in an interactive sequential setting. One of the most important foreign policy decisions for a country is related to relations to its alliances. Military alliances, in their most common form, are agreements between signatory states that spell out what each will do in the event of armed aggression towards one of the allies. Decisions are made by leaders inviting new states to join a coalition states forming an alliance and by leaders responding to those invitations.

When a state faces a decision during an international crisis, the regime type of

its adversary could be an influential factor. There is strong evidence that a democracy will not fight another democracy. There is something inherent in democracy that pushes disputants toward peaceful resolution rather than direct violent confrontation. If a democratic state is facing off against another democracy then violence might be in almost all circumstances is highly ruled out (Doyle, 1983).

According to Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, disputes in democracies should be solved peacefully. In non-democracies, leaders govern by coercion in winner-take-all systems. Therefore, democracies treat each other differently from the way they treat non-democracies. If a democracy is in a dispute with a non-democracy, then the democracy is more likely to resort to the more aggressive norms of the anarchic international system. This means that democracies are involved in many conflicts but not with each other. Survival is the key in the anarchic system and democracies will be tough in dealing with non-democracies. Democratic leaders will make the decision to shift to the norms of the anarchic system. The normative model implies that older democracies will be more peaceful because their peaceful norms of behaviour are better established and absorbed. There is a sense of stability and persistence of peaceful norms in older democracies (Maoz and Russet, 1993).

2.4.2. Domestic Politics

Government type is important in that it tells us which political actors and resources are legitimate and the processes by which policy decisions are made. But regardless of government or regime type, what is important to the analyst is identifying the domestic political process by which winners and losers are determined on any given foreign policy issue. The process involves some interaction between members of the governing regime and other significant actors, interaction that is characterized by formal (generally written) and informal rules. The motivation of the actors, in the most basic terms, is to retain or gain political power within these rules (and sometimes despite these rules when their aims are revolutionary). Political power is not necessarily the end point, as the actors also have policy agendas they want enacted. Thus, the actors are also motivated to build and maintain policy coalitions. How actors attempt to manage the domestic political game—to bargain with opponents and/or supporters or not, to attempt to make decisions as if they are not bargaining when they are, to push through a dominant solution or attempt to

strike a compromise position, to take actions that lock all the actors into a stalemate or deadlock—has both the immediate and longer term consequences.

Some of the traits of states in which domestic politics play a big role are:

• National leaders play a two-level or nested game between international and domestic politics.

• National leaders in any type of political system are motivated by two similar goals: retain political power, and build and maintain policy coalitions.

• Leaders will sometimes engage in risky foreign policy behaviours in order to undercut the nationalist rhetoric of opposition elites and prove their own government's legitimacy.

• Democratization is a transitional phase that can get stuck or reversed when threatened elites use nationalist mobilization strategies to stop the erosion of their power. (Neack 2008)

2.4.3. Cultural Factors

A culturally maintained national self-image does more than just influence the broad notions and directions of a country's foreign policy. National self-image and the culture that supports it also influence the types of institutions constructed within a state and the foreign policy decision-making authority allotted to those institutions. It should be understood that a people's culture would influence the shape and type of its political structures when that people is self-governing. For example, once we have found that a country exhibits high degrees of siege mentality, it should come as no surprise to find mandatory, universal military conscription. The urgent need to protect the in-group results is the practical need for a strong and ready military. The need for a strong military necessitates conscription.

The greatest concentration of scholarly activity on the impact of culture and institutions on foreign policy has been on the idea of the democratic peace. This research finds its intellectual roots in philosopher Immanuel Kant's proposition that democracies are peace-loving countries. In the first modern variation on this idea, it was asserted that democracies are less likely to go to war than nondemocratic states. In a later version, the idea was refined to the proposition that democracies do not fight wars with other democracies. If true, a world of democracies would be a world freed from war. (Doyle, 1983)

2.4.4. Interest Groups

Following the executive, legislative and bureaucratic aspects of formulation of foreign policy, there is another party which has an influence on it which are known as interest groups. These groups are certain organised sections of the American public who aspire to achieve a political agenda but cannot fulfil that agenda on their own (Thomas, 2004). They employ numerous lobbying methods such as talking directly to policy formulators or pledging contributions to election campaigns of candidates to fulfil the agenda of the group. Even though these groups are not directly involved in policy making still they strive to influence it from the outside. Currently in the Washington D.C. there a large number of interest groups present. At the start of 2000, the number of such groups was almost 11,000 and approximately $3 billion were spent by these groups (Steel, 1999). Interest groups main area of influence is the Congress as they cannot access the executive branch of the government. They even hire lobbying firms to influence members of the Congress as well as different committees of the legislative. The primary interest groups are business groups, labour unions, religious organisations, ethnic groups, veterans groups, ideological groups, think tanks and foreign lobbies.

Business groups consist of major corporations who are on the Fortune 500 list such as General Electric, Boeing and Lockheed Martin. Their main targets of influence are the Department of State as well as the Congress and these corporate lobby actively push for governmental institutions to realise their agendas. These companies have a presence in the United States and other parts of the world so they have the capacity and willingness to influence domestic and international foreign policy. Their goals include the promotion of a strong national defense, as well as increasing their imports and increasing international trade. Labour groups also have an influence on the policy but they are focused more on the domestic issues related to labour such as importing from foreign countries and job security. The American labour movement plays an active role in lobbying Congress and the presidency on protecting US from job outsourcing and cheaper imports (McCormick, 2010).

There are currently 110 religious groups lobbying in Washington on issues related to religion and foreign policy (Sheridan, 2007). They have had an influence on various government policies such as immigration, relations with China and

Middle East, sanctioning Cuba and Iraq. There were religious organisations that were both supporting and opposing the war in Iraq. Leaders of Evangelical groups and other organisations such as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention supported the decision made by the Bush government. On the other hand, the Quakers, the United Methodists and the United Church of Christ campaigned against the Iraq war (McCormick, 2010).

Ethnic groups such as Irish, Jewish or having heritage of East Europe are also actively influencing foreign policy. Nowadays other ethnic groups consisting of African Americans, Hispanics and Greeks have also increased their lobbying efforts (Smith, 2000). The primary foreign policy agenda of these ethnic groups is to influence the foreign policy of United States towards their respective regions and countries. Veterans groups lobby for the benefit of military personnel who served during various American wars. These include American Veterans of World War II, the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign wars that have influenced American policy at different times such as during the Vietnam, Gulf and Afghanistan and Iraq wars (Hughes, 1978). Their main agenda includes better treatment for veterans and speaking out against American wars.

Various Ideological groups also have had a significant influence on US policy. There are prominent conservative interest groups such as the American Conservative Union (ACU) as well as liberal interest groups such as Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). These groups have their respective positions on the foreign policy but also have an effect on members of Congress. They evaluate members by giving scores based on their annual performance. Another well-known group which fights for constitutional rights of individual and discussing foreign policy is the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act), which was passed by Congress on October 26, 2001, was widely criticised by the ACLU for violating the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution related to the unreasonable searches and seizures (McCormick, 2010).

A recently acknowledged group having an increased effect on policy is the foreign lobbies. These groups often hire American citizens who lobby Congress to

treat their clients favourably. The number of countries which have representation in Washington has increased from 75 in the 1970s, to 143 in the first decade of 21st century (Sheridan, 2007). Significant examples of this are the Jewish and Saudi lobbies who both actively lobby members of congress to back their stance and to keep a good rapport with the executive and legislative branch (Tivnan, 1987). The last important group are the think tanks which are funded by foundations, corporations and, in some cases, individuals. Their primary role is to investigate a specific problem or issue and offer their recommendations and the results are then shared with the executive and legislative branches.

The shared results are in the form of opinion pieces in major Newspapers, published articles and books or a Capitol Hill testimony. Compared to other countries, Think tanks have been more successful in influencing policy in the United States primarily because the political system is open for their operations (Higgott and Stone, 1994). Another reason is the rapport between the analysts and scholars with the people in Washington D.C. which could be of further advantage if any think tank employee acquires a government position (Ruland *et. al*, 2016). The two oldest think tanks are the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which was established by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1910 and the Council on Foreign Relations, which was established after World War I and adopted a stance against isolationism.

2.4.5. Public Opinion and Media

The relationship between public opinion and foreign policy making is complicated. Scholars and policy makers offer different views on this relationship, but not views that are always compatible. There are two basic views on the relationship between public opinion and policy making. The first suggests a strong impact, and the second denies any real impact. The first view derives from the pluralist model of policy making. This view is "a 'bottom-up' approach which assumes that the general public has a measurable and distinct impact on the foreign policy making process; in sum, leaders follow masses." The second view "representing the conventional wisdom in the literature suggests a 'top-down' process, according to which popular consensus is a function of the elite consensus and elite cleavages trickle down to mass public opinion" (Risse-Kappen, 1991). This view is consistent with realism, as it envisions a persistent national interest pursued

by elites and a passive, submissive, or unimportant mass public.

There are three segments of public. The first is the mass public that is not interested in foreign policy matters, holds no or only poorly informed views on foreign policy, and therefore has no impact on policy making. The second is the attentive public, which, by its name, is attentive to or interested in and informed about world affairs. However, this group only has an impact on foreign policy making if interest groups whose power resources are greater than an unstructured public articulate its views. Finally, there is the elite, that small section of the public that is interested, informed, and influential in the shaping of public opinion. Distinguishing the pubic by these three groups follows the realist bend of earlier studies that dismissed the public as ignorant and volatile and, susceptible to manipulation. Public opinion matters more in non-democracies as compared to democracies because democratic structures allow public opinion to manifest itself in different ways than do nondemocratic structures.

The media and foreign policy play an equally important role in influencing foreign policy but that is done more indirectly compared to the other elements previously mentioned. The public effects policy through numerous ways such as talking to members of Congress from their respective states, through national polls, during presidential and congressional elections through staging protests to let know of their displeasure on a certain foreign policy issue. The media affects foreign policy depending on how they cover certain issues and that could also affect public opinion. Here we will analyse the growth of media and how it affects foreign policy in different ways. Also, we will discuss the different types of American public and role of public opinion on policy.

Over the years, media has grown exponentially and the types of media have increased as well. It started with newspapers and radio transmissions followed by television and cable news. Now the media has evolved further with the introduction of internet and smart phones which has increased the number of people having access to the events happening around the world. The media can be now accessed from anywhere and by anyone. This added reach gives the media further clout because it can influence public opinion as well and the government would want to keep the media on their side (McCormick, 2010). Everyone including government officials

and the general public depend on it for facts about world matters. Consequently, media has the power to shape the foreign policy depending on how they depict any incident.

The important role that the media plays in terms of influencing the policy making processes mainly came to forefront during the Vietnam War. The media disclosed what was actually happening in Vietnam with pictures being telecasted on the television enlightening the American public. The media showed the actual destruction and killing occurring on both sides as well as doing interviews with on-field military personnel who told horrifying details of events (Gelb and Betts, 2016). This proved to be a revelation because the government was trying to prove that the war was successful but the media showed otherwise which led to strong protests. The government officials went on the back foot due to these developments and had to explain their position which had an enormous effect on the course of its policy in the following days.

Another important moment was during the Iran Hostage Crisis in 1979 where 52 American diplomats were held hostage at the US embassy in Tehran for 444 days. As a result, a nightly program was broadcasted to keep track of the predicament by ABC television network which was shrewdly named *America Held Hostage.* The program was broadcasted each night until the hostage situation was resolved but it created a negative image of the government in the public eye. The government was shown to be powerless and unable to help its citizens and resulted in the public losing trust in the administration of President Carter (McCormick, 2010).

During the Iraq War the media showed the instability in the country caused by the war as well as reporting the difficulties faced by the US government in reconstruction and attacks on American forces. This led to a strong reaction from the Bush government including their supporters who blamed the media of only reporting the negative aspects of war and not showing the complete picture which was discouraging the American public and affecting the president's popularity. As a result, there were a series of meetings between Bush and the media reporters to explain the government's view. In addition to this senior officials of the government including the Secretaries of State and Defense, as well as the National Security Advisor were given the task to regularly brief the media. The officials were sent to

Iraq as well so that it could be shown that the government has been somewhat successful in their efforts which again show the influence media can have on policy.

Compared to media, public opinion has had a relatively limited direct influence on foreign policy which is due to a general lack of interest and information of the public in international affairs. Other than an international crisis or during a war the American public is usually considered to be not concerned with happens outside their country. Also, the public response is seen as a reaction to a certain situation rather than having an influence on the overall policy formation. This means that the policy makers usually are not under much pressure from the public. From 1970s onwards, the public did not show much interest in global affairs barring wars in Vietnam or the Gulf region and any other crisis (McCormick, 2010). Only after September 11, was the attention of the public brought towards foreign affairs again. The war in Afghanistan was very popular in 2001 because it was seen as an act of revenge for the 9/11 attacks; the war later became unpopular among war weary Americans who became aware of the lies leading to the war in Iraq. Public pressure led to the demise of George W. Bush and the subsequent rise of Barack Obama. The American public in time get tired of these wars and therefore supproted Obama's shift to the use of drones to fight the so-called the War on Terror with different means. The policy has changed –drones instead of direct armed intervention and troops on the ground– and is presented as a zero-death solution for Americans (Guerlain, 2014).

According to political scientist Eugene Wittkopf, there are four divisions of the public in the United States namely accommodationists, isolationists, hardliners and internationalists (Wittkopf, 1990). Isolationists are against any sort of cooperation internationally, economic or military, and believe that the United States should not get too much involved in international affairs. They have had a negative opinion of the government's involvement in the Gulf, Bosnia and Iraq and are of the point that there was no need for the United States to be involved. Similarly, from this perspective they did not see Iraq as a direct threat to the America and would demand an immediate withdrawal of troops.

Accommodationists are also against military involvement but are in favour of cooperation in other aspects. For example, in the opinion of Accommodationists,

economic sanctions against Iraq in 1990 would have been more suitable rather than military intervention. Similar to Isolationists, they would also demand troop withdrawal from Iraq and argued that sanctions on Saddam Hussein would have brought a better result had they given a better chance. Hardliners are opposite to the Accommodationists and fully support military action against enemies of America. They would be in complete support of the War in Iraq and would keep the troops there until the condition of the country gets better.

Internationalists have an opposite opinion to the isolationists and are in support of American involvement both militarily and in the form of a united effort through an international organisation such as the UN or NATO. They were in support of US efforts in the Gulf and in Bosnia as well as the use of military force in Iraq but would also be in support of a gradual rather than an immediate withdrawal. Wittkopf believed that these four sections can be seen equally among the American public which shows why it's difficult to for the people to agree on one issue (Wittkopf, 1990). This is considered to be the one of the main reasons for why the American public does not have as much an impact of foreign policy as expected; while, this does not necessarily mean that the politicians can completely ignore the wishes of the people.

CHAPTER 3: EVOLUTION OF US FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS

Ever since its independence in 1776, there have been critical moments in the history of the United States of America which has led to a significant foreign policy decisions being made. Starting with the policy of exceptionalism in its early days to the decision to invade Iraq, each decision had varying degrees of effect on the world affairs as well. In this chapter those decisions and their effect on the world will be analysed in two time periods, firstly during 1776-1945 where the country is establishing itself on the global stage and then post-World War II time period where the US acted as a contender for being a global hegemon.

3.1 US foreign policy during 1776-1945

Following independence, the founding fathers of the American nation, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and others decided that they would first focus on nation building and avoid meddling in global affairs. The thirteen states of America had just broken the chains of colonialism and at that time the French and the British were the major powers of the world so it would have been unwise to confront with either. A resolution was passed by the Continental Congress in 1783 according to which America would not be dragged into the European affairs (Raimondo, 2017). The reason behind it was that the newly formed nation did not want to choose any one side so at such an early stage of existence, as well as to avoid provoking European meddling in American affairs. The primary focus at the time was to develop and enhance trade and not choosing a side meant that there could be trade with all nations (Schmidt, 2005).

That position proved to be correct in the future with the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789 which was followed by large scale conflicts between the French and British. By not choosing a side, America was not under any pressure to fight and focused on expanding its trade and territory while the British and French weakened each other. In 1796, during his farewell address, George Washington reiterated this stance by saying that America would sustain its defense and avoid making permanent alliance with any country (McDougall, 1997). Jefferson also was famously quoted at the time he became president in 1801 where he said that "Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none."

(Gardner *et al.*, 1976). This became known as "American Exceptionalism" or Isolationism where it was thought that America had its unique interests such as securing and expanding its borders as well as increasing its trade markets. The only way to protect those interests was by being independent of all nations especially the European heavyweights (Cox and Stokes, 2018).

The policy of Isolationism paid dividends for America and it quickly began to establish itself with growing trade and territories especially with the purchase of Louisiana from France in 1803 (Renehan, 2007). However, this policy was replaced by the Monroe Doctrine which opened the doors for American involvement in global matters. The reason behind this change of foreign policy was the emergence of numerous states in South America becoming independent from colonial rule during 1810s. America was afraid of possible meddling from Europeans in the region which could affect its trade in the region (McCormick, 2013). The President at the time, James Monroe established the new foreign policy principles for the United States in a message that was sent to Congress on December 2, 1823. The Monroe Doctrine contained three main points namely:

i. There would be no further colonization of the Western Hemisphere;
ii. Any attempt at colonization would be considered a hostile act against America;
iii. The United States would maintain its policy of non-interference in European affairs.

This proved to be a hugely successful move and deterred any European nation to approach South America in the following years (Lindsay, 2010). From a European perspective, the United States had announced itself as the major power in the Western hemisphere, and marked its territory where there could be no external influence thereby putting an end to colonial rule in its region (Cox and Stokes, 2018). The next major shift in US foreign policy came during World War I. With the start of the 20th century the US was now fully established as a major power of the world. Following the industrial revolution, America had prospered and the whole world turn into its target for markets. The United States was responsible for 11 percent of the world trade in 1913 which not only consisted of agricultural products but also petroleum products coal and steel (Zieger and Zieger, 2001).

But it was posed with a dilemma whether to be a part of the ongoing Great War or not as it was not America's war. The only reason to participate would have to be morally or ethically righteous rather than just involving in to help settling the European conflict. That reason was presented to the United States by Germany by first waging naval and submarine warfare in the Atlantic Ocean violating the freedom of the seas and the rights of neutrals principle agreed earlier. Secondly, another major became a telegram received by Mexico from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann asking it to instigate a war with the US (Kenan, 1984). Therefore, the United States entered World War I in the late phases of the conflict in1917 and eventually placed among the winners of the war along with its allies. But after winning the war, the US also wanted to make sure there were no further wars of this magnitude so then President Woodrow Wilson suggested the creating a League of Nations. But that plan was fiercely opposed by the Republicans and Congress at home who were of the view that the Unite States should maintain its non-involvement in world affairs (Cox and Stokes, 2018). However, as President Wilson was affected by stroke and had to surrender the presidency which meant that the United States opted against joining the newly formed League of Nations and went back to its isolationist position in world affairs.

However, the US was soon to come back to European shores with the beginning of World War II. Under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, Germany posed an even bigger challenge and threat compared to World War I and was this time also joined by the Japanese. Again, the United States was initially not interested in interfering with the ongoing conflict then President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress on the same page. But this time the United States was suffering from a crisis of its own in the form of the Great Depression during 1929-39 which severely depleted the American economy. This became another excuse for the US not to interfere in "Europe's war". Before the war began, Britain and France – with the agreement of the US – allowed Germany to take over Czechoslovakia as form of appeasement so as to avoid war (Record, 2007).

However, Germany was further encouraged by this tame surrender and declared war along with Japan and Italy (Schmidt, 2005). The United States reasoned that weakened economy meant that it could not afford to go to war again and tried to evade that possibility as much as possible. However, the attack on Pearl

Harbour on 7 December 1941 by Japanese forces changed the destiny of US foreign policy and the future world affairs. The attack on Pearl Harbour resulted in the death of 2,403 people including civilians as well as almost 1,000 people suffered injuries (Pearl Harbor, 2009). President Roosevelt asked the Congress to declare war and the Congress obliged by declaring war on Japan. The entry of the United States titled the war in the favour of its allies but the war was not over until another memorable incident. In 1945, then President Harry Truman ordered the drop of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki cities of Japan, which killed a combined 200,000 people (Andrew and Andrew, 1995). This shook the entire world and coupled with German's previous surrender in Europe, the war finally came to an end.

The Second World War brought the United States back on the global stage, initially albeit in a reluctant manner. While Europe was in ruins, the United States emerged as a superpower solely posessing the most destructive weapon on the planet. On this occasion, it was even more important that the world needed a leader to take it out of economic and political turmoil, a role that the US was now ready and willing to fulfil. The United Nations was established with the initiative of the US, as it had been working on this along with the British since the early stages of the Second World War, a working upgrade of the previously failed League of Nations. Additionally, in order to gain influence over global economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank were established as initiatives of the US officials in 1944 (Cox and Stokes, 2018). The IMF was aimed to create an environment conducive to develop international financial cooperation so the deadly economic wars between nations which had marked the 1930s could not be repeated. The World Bank was to provide financial support for international cooperation in the form of investments and funding to rebuild the post-war world. The world was America's oyster.

3.2 US foreign policy post-1945 era

After the end of World War II, Europe was decimated. Great Britain and France, once regarded as major powers of the world, were almost in ruins and very much weakened due to the burdens of the war. The might of the Germans was crushed and their territory was occupied by the allies. The mainly two states emerged as competitive for major role to play in the international arena, the United States and Soviet Union, both had almost mutually exclusive fundamentals regarding

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governance. The US was built on capitalistic ideals while the Soviet Union had been following communist understanding of economics and politics. The world, which had been multipolar in the previous centuries, became bipolar with the US focused on rebuilding Europe, while Soviets were attempting to increase expand its sphere of influence in Europe. This situation brought about a major change in US foreign policy as they had to abandon exceptionalism and evolve to become a central figure in the global affairs. For a long time the US had avoided to intervene in European affairs until the event of a major war but now had felt to take responsibility and get involved on a constant basis. Europe was too vulnerable in front of the Soviet threat and America was committed to rebuilding it to prevent another war in the region. This transition period was also became the indicator of the beginning of a new, different kind of worldwide confrontation, the Cold War.

At the start of the conflict, there were more political points of contention rather than a military. The first point was to how to manage German territories, the US deciding to re-build Germany while the Soviet began dismantling their acquired German territory. The second point of contention was at the UN level where the Soviet leader Stalin refused to be a part of the IMF or World Bank. In 1946, the Soviets were not in favour of joining any international organisation which would be controlled by the US as they refused to be driven by the Americans politically or economically. Thirdly, there was a race to influence the countries that were still undecided which power to go along with (Cox and Stokes, 2018).

However, as certain world events that took place in the following two years the conflict transformed from a primarily a political contention to an armed one. China was overtaken by a communist regime 1949 and the Korean War broke out in 1950, both events going against US expectations. In addition to this, the tensions over how to govern Germany persisted. But the biggest shift in US policy was induced with the news that the Soviets had developed their own nuclear weapon meaning the US had lost its only advantage. Under these circumstances, two important decisions were made by the Harry Truman administration. Firstly, the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was ratified by Senate and later the North Atlantic Treaty was signed by President Truman on 23 July 1949. The aim of NATO was to collectively defend its members against any possible military attack from the Soviet Union. Secondly, the following year brought

about further conflicts internationally such as the Communist party taking control of China and the beginning of the Korean War. During these state of affairs, a document known as NSC-68 was formulated by the National Security Council that called for a wide ranged and strong containment policy toward the Soviet Union. The document proposed a rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength in the free world. This strategy would be the cornerstone of American foreign policy towards the Soviets in the following decades until its dissolution in late 1991.

3.3 Effect of September 11 attacks on Foreign policy

Eliminating the threat of Soviet Union during the 1990s was supposed to mean that the United States would become the undisputed power of the world thereby gaining extensive influence over world affairs. However, that was not the case as other challenges came up from rogue states such as North Korea, Iraq and Iran. The United States was unable to deal with such challenges successfully and had to face criticism over its role in global politics (Lemann, 2002). George W. Bush, during the presidential campaign in 2000, declared that if he was to come to power, then he would focus more on avoiding extensive troop deployment internationally, focusing on core national security interests rather than the interests of the world (Zoellick, 2000).

But that policy was to change almost immediately in the aftermath of September 11, bringing the US back into the international arena. The incident had a deep impact, not just at the administrative level but it shook all of American public. The focus was firmly on foreign policy, with the Government having complete support from Congress and the American public to make any decision. This support was visible in the opinion polls, with Bush's approval rating shooting up to 90 percent after the attacks compared to 51 percent before it (Murray and Spinosa, 2004). Before the event, public opinion was against the use of military force, but later it transformed to full support for use of armed methods in the forms of sending troops or resorting airstrikes to kill the leaders of terrorist groups (Fund, 2002). The Bush administration was enjoying a level of support which had not been get by any previous presidents since Kennedy (Murray and Spinosa, 2004).

The Congress, which had a rocky relationship with the executive branch since the Vietnam War, was in complete support for any legislation against the threat of terrorism. In the days following September 11, Senate Joint Resolution 23 was

sanctioned which authorized the President to use force "against those nations, organizations, or persons, he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks" (McCormick, 2013). In October of the same year, the USA PATRIOT Act was passed which gave the President even greater power going after terrorists but the legislation also reduced certain civil liberty protections (Arnold, 2006).

In addition to this, other pieces of legislation were passed with little or no opposition such as increasing intelligence authorization, improving border security and visa entry requirements, revising the immigration act and supporting the victims of terrorism (McCormick, 2013). In the following year, the support from Congress continued but the level of support decreased somewhat especially while the Government was trying to pass The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Act of 2002. The DHS was to become one of the largest governmental bureaucracies in the history of the American Republic (Brzezinski, 2005). The act was passed with relative ease in the House of Representatives (295-133) but faced considerable opposition in the Senate. However, after winning the congressional elections, it was passed in the Senate as well with ease (90-9) (Tomisek, 2002).

These legislations changed the foreign policy direction of the Bush administration in three ways. Initially, the foreign policy was supposed to be narrow, realist and more focused on American interests but later it transformed into a more universal, idealist and multi-lateral approach (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003). The most noteworthy aspect of this renewed foreign policy was the swift establishment of a joint coalition. By the time the operation started on October 7, 2001, Several US allies pledged to become a part of the coalition such as Germany, Britain, France, Australia and Canada along with other countries. In addition to this, the US was granted over flight and landing rights by more than forty governments (State Department, 2001). The strategy formulated by the US was based on achieving four main targets: destroying the Taliban, crushing Al-Qaeda's capability to run terrorist camps, revamping the political and economic system of Afghanistan and establish democratic foundations (Bush, 2002a).

3.4. Pre-emptive invasion of Iraq

The US approach to hunt down the terrorists as well as their collaborators internationally became known as the Bush Doctrine but was officially known as The

National Security Strategy of the United States of America, which declared that the fundamental aim of American foreign policy was "to create a balance of power that favors freedom" (McCormick, 2013). The second principle of the Bush Doctrine, which became controversial later, was acting "pre-emptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country" (Bush, 2002b). After initiating war in Afghanistan, the next country on the agenda of the Bush administration was Iraq. The issue was first raised by Donald Rumsfeld, the then Secretary of State and the Department of State had been working for months on developing a military option on dealing with Saddam Hussein (Woodward, 2002).

Some key advisors supported quick and unilateral action to remove Saddam Hussein, whereas others, most prominently Colin Powell and his deputy, Richard Armitage, argued that this had "risks and complexities" that needed more analysis (Purdum and Tyler, 2002). In October 2002, Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the president to use force "as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq and enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions regarding Iraq" (McCormick, 2013). The resolution was easily passed in House of Representatives by 296–133 and Senate by 77–23. By summer 2002, the Iraq issue had set off a pitched debate within the administration.

By fall 2002, the Bush administration had decided to challenge the international community, and the United Nations, to address the issue of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq by seeking a multilateral solution. In a speech to the United Nations, President Bush issued just such a challenge (Bush, 2003). After five weeks of negotiation, on November 8, 2002, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441, which found Iraq in "material breach" of a previous UN resolution (Wedgwood, 2003). This was UN Resolution 687, passed at the end of the Gulf War in 1991, which called for Iraq's disarmament of its weapons of mass destruction. In addition, it required Iraq to report within 30 days on all aspects of its programs related to weapons of mass destruction and ordered that Iraq immediately allow the UN and IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) inspectors back into the country. Significantly, the resolution stated, "that the Council has repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations." In accordance with Resolution 1441, Iraq provided a report to the UN

in December 2002 on its weapons program and allowed UN and IAEA inspectors into the country. Over the next several months, the chief inspectors provided reports to the UN Security Council on the status of the inspections and the disarmament that indicated that Iraq was not fully complying with either the resolution or with the inspectors. However, the inspectors requested more time from the Security Council to complete their work.

By March 2003, the Bush administration's patience had run out on the failure of the UN Security Council to act against Iraq. At the urging of the British prime minister, Tony Blair, the United States, Great Britain, and Spain circulated another draft UN resolution explicitly to find Iraq in "material breach" and implicitly to obtain approval for military action to enforce Resolution 1441. This new resolution never reached a vote because several nations on the council, led principally by the French and the potential use of its veto, did not support it. Indeed, France indicated that it would not support any resolution that would lead to war. As a result, President Bush issued an ultimatum to Iraq and its leadership on March 17, 2003: "Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their refusal to do so will result in military conflict, commenced at a time of our choosing" (Bush, 2003).

When the Iraqi leadership refused to comply, the United States attacked a command bunker in Baghdad, and the war, called Operation Iraqi Freedom, began. The president took this action without another UN resolution and instead relied on the congressional resolution passed in October 2002. The administration put together a "coalition of the willing" (some 42 nations initially), much as the *National Security Strategy* of a few months earlier had stated. Yet the United States and Great Britain carried out the principal military action, with some assistance from Australia and a few other countries. Clearly, the Bush administration was willing to act alone (or with an informal coalition) in going after tyrants and terrorists and in implementing its national security strategy. The war went well and quickly for the United States and Great Britain, with the loss of relatively few lives in its initial phases. The United States gained control of Baghdad by April 9, only three weeks after the start of the war, and President Bush declared "major combat operations" over on May 1. Still, winning the peace and establishing a stable democratic government proved to be more difficult. Indeed, American deaths mounted over the following months as Iraqi resistance continued. Equally challenging was the effort to uncover clear evidence of

weapons of mass destruction -the fundamental rationale for the war- and to capture Saddam Hussein.

By summer 2003, as the number of American killed in post-war Iraq continue to increase and as weapons of mass destruction remained undiscovered, criticism of Bush policy by the bureaucracy and Capitol Hill began to surface. Some charged that the administration had skewed intelligence data to support its war against Iraq or had pressured intelligence analysts to provide supportive estimates (Pillar, 2018). The integrity of the Bush administration's policy making was called into question, and the Senate Intelligence Committee called hearings to investigate. Although Saddam Hussein was ultimately captured in December 2003, the Bush administration's foreign policy continued to face scrutiny and criticism both at home and abroad. By this time, too, foreign policy, and the Iraq War in particular, became a central issue in the 2004 presidential election campaign (McCormick, 2013).

George W. Bush won a narrow victory in the 2004 presidential election, partly on his antiterrorist foreign policy stance. However, the second-term Bush administration initially sought to alter its foreign policy approach, including the war on terror (Stout, 2004). The administration also made changes in foreign policy personnel at home as part of this seeming new direction. Early in the second term key neo-conservatives like Paul Wolfowitz and Doug Feith at Defense and John Bolton at State Departments left the administration, and new pragmatists and foreign policy realists filled these important posts. (Gordon, 2006) In particular, Robert Zoellick was appointed as Deputy Secretary of State, Nicholas Burns assumed the number-three position as Undersecretary of State for political affairs, and Christopher Hill became Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific affairs. Despite changes in personnel and actions, sharp doubts continued among foreign leaders and publics about the Bush administration and its foreign policy. A majority of the American public and numerous members of Congress also voiced doubts, especially about the Iraq War.

Although the Bush administration was successful in winning the White House and in keeping Republicans in control of the Congress in the 2004 elections, based in part on a campaign of antiterrorism, domestic support for the president and his Iraq policy quickly began to erode by mid-2005. Indeed, public approval of the president had dropped significantly since the initiation of the war and by the beginning of 2008

hovered just slightly above 30 percent. Since March 2005, when his presidential job approval dropped to 45 percent, there had been only two instances in the weekly Gallup tracking polls (April, 4–7, 2005, and May 2–5, 2005) when the president's approval rating was at 50 percent. Instead, the trend was consistently downward from March 2005, reaching its lowest level up to that time at 31 percent in the polling of May 5–7, 2006 (McCormick, 2016). By April, 2008, 58 percent of the public viewed the Iraq War as a mistake. The sharp drop in public support was equally matched by the rise in criticism of the Bush administration's foreign policy by analysts, commentators, and members of the Congress.

President Bush hinted that he would carefully consider the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, but he quickly moved in a different direction. At the beginning of 2007, he adopted a new strategy for Iraq, prepared by General David Petraeus, the commander of the coalition. Widely referred to as the "surge strategy", he called for an increase in the number of American soldiers by around 21,000 to suppress religious sectarian violence and to provide the Iraqi government with time for internal political reconciliation (Figure 1). This change in policy triggered harsh criticism from Congress. For example, Senator Hagel described the President's speech on the strategy of sudden growth "the most dangerous error of foreign policy in this country since Vietnam" (Nather, 2007). The House of Representatives then issued a non-binding resolution that did not approve of the increase, even though the Senate did In the following months of 2007, the Democratic majority undertook several attempts to cut funding for Iraq and set a date for the withdrawal of the United States.

This reliance on unilateralism and the policy of pre-emption by the Bush administration along with its vocal rhetoric had the effect of tarnishing America's image abroad and, more generally, of eroding its "soft power", that is, the attractiveness of its values and culture and its ability to influence international actions. Changes in these two areas by a new administration, as well as broader policy changes, would aim to likely improve America's reputation and restore its influence in the world affairs.
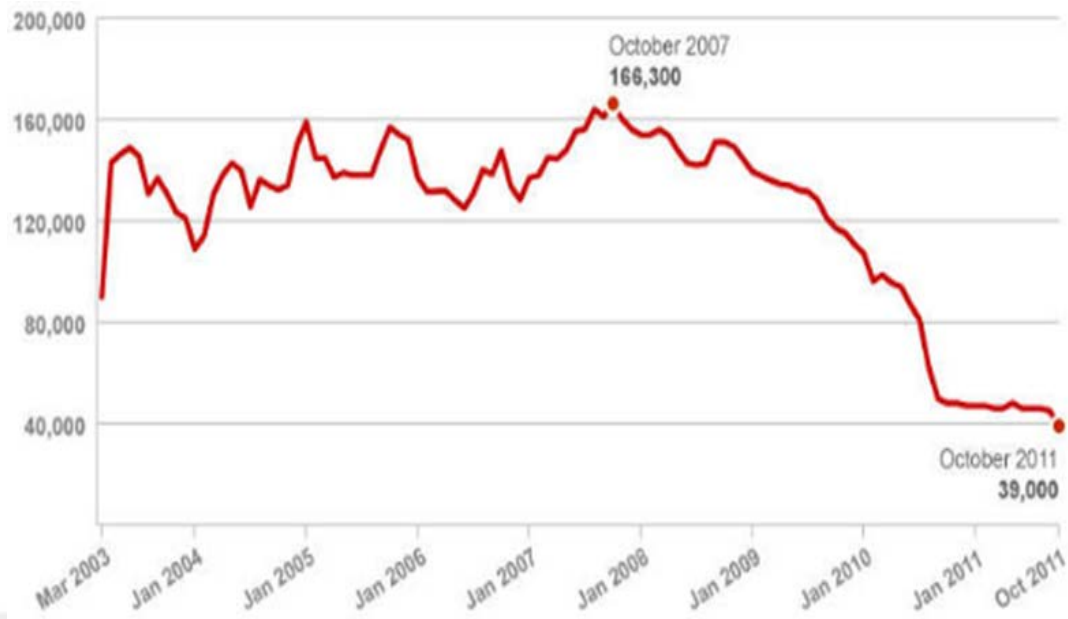
Figure 1 Timeline of US troops in Iraq. Source: CNN, 2012, retrieved from
https://edition.cnn.com/2011/10/21/world/meast/chart-us-troops-iraq/index.html

CHAPTER 4: OBAMA'S ACCESSION TO THE WHITE HOUSE: WAY TO CLEANING THE MESS, SAVING THE FACE IN IRAQ

The 2008 presidential elections in the United States saw Republican candidate John McCain, who was a well-respected Vietnam veteran compete against a relatively young and unknown candidate from the Democrats. Barack Obama was an African American senator with having a name foreign to the American public but famously beat the more popular and experienced Hillary Clinton to the Democratic Party nomination for presidency. Initially, his election campaign was unfamiliar among most voters and he remained behind Hillary Clinton for most of the campaign period. However, Obama's victory in the Iowa primary in January gave him the impetus and he gained an unaccepted lead over Clinton which she could not overcome until the end (Jacobson, 2009). Obama's victory was a result of many factors such as better organisation, shrewd fund-raising via internet, rhetorical skills and overall superior strategy.

However, the most important factor which led to Obama's presidential victory was the Iraq War and George W. Bush. Interestingly, the Iraq subject also gave Barack Obama an advantage over Hillary Clinton in the Democrat nomination. Obama had been against war in Iraq since the beginning, while Clinton was among those who voted in favour of invading Iraq. Voters perceived Hillary as a supporter of the status quo, who would continue the old policies. On the other hand, Obama was seen as someone who would bring change, which was often repeated during his election campaign. The Democrats were completely against Bush and mostly to the Iraq war so they were in favour of change (Jacobson, 2010).

Even before the start of the presidential election, the Democrats had gained an advantage due to the strong public reaction against George W. Bush and the Iraq war. However, by then, the public grew more enraged because of the economic decline of the country while there were heavy expenses of the on-going Iraq war. At the end of Bush's tenure, the total money that spend on the Iraq War had reached to $587.5 billion and the peak of United States direct war spending was more than $141 Billion in 2008 (Figure 2). However, there was some good news in the form of a decrease in the number of deaths of US troops which had decreased by 85% from 2007, lowest level since the war began (Figure 3). Still, it was not enough to satisfy

the public as the economic crisis that began in 2007 turn into the number one source of public displeasure (Jones, 2008).

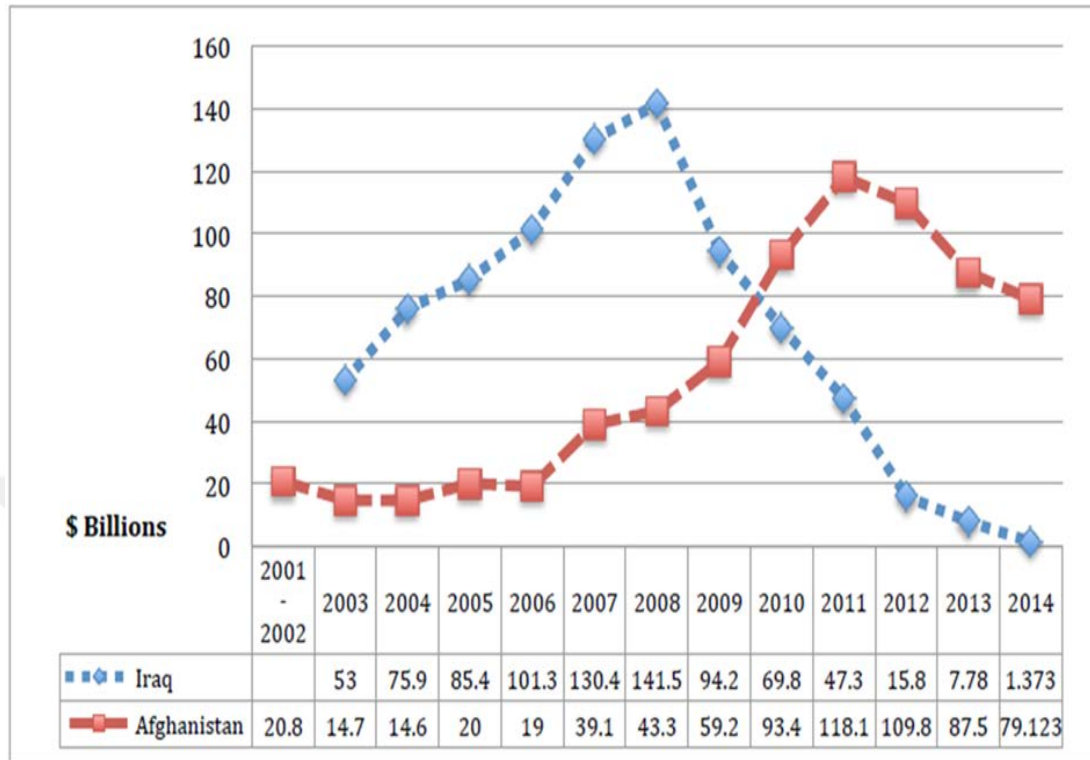|	2001 - 2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Iraq		53	75.9	85.4	101.3	130.4	141.5	94.2	69.8	47.3	15.8	7.78	1.373
Afghanistan	20.8	14.7	14.6	20	19	39.1	43.3	59.2	93.4	118.1	109.8	87.5	79.123

Figure 2 US spending in Iraq and Afghanistan during Fiscal Year 2001-2014. Source: Crawford, N. (2014). US Costs of Wars Through 2014, $4.4 Trillion and Counting: Summary of Costs for the US Wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Costs of War Project. (Accessed on 10 January 2019).

Year	US	UK	Other	Total
2003	486	53	41	580
2004	849	22	35	906
2005	846	23	28	897
2006	823	29	21	873
2007	904	47	10	961
2008	314	4	4	322
2009	148	1	0	149
2010	62	0	0	62
2011	58	0	0	58
2012	2	0	0	2
2014	4	0	0	4
2015	8	0	2	10
2016	20	0	0	20
2017	22	1	1	24
2018	17	1	0	18
2019	3	0	0	3
Total	**4566**	**181**	**142**	**4889**

Figure 3: Number of casualties in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation New Dawn (OND) and Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) by year and country. Source: Iraq Coalition Casualty Count 2019, retrieved from www.icasualties.org (Accessed on 10 January 2019).

4.1. Obama's journey to the presidency

During his presidential campaign, the main theme employed by Barack Obama was that of "Change". He presented himself to the American public as the one who will fix the problems created by the Bush administration. He was a vocal critic of the foreign policy of George W. Bush, especially the manner in which the "War on Terror" was carried out. Obama promised in his campaigns that he would strive to make the US foreign policy more cooperative, compassionate and moral. In an article he wrote in 2007 Obama declared that "We must bring the war to a responsible end and then renew our leadership -- military, diplomatic, moral -- to confront new threats and capitalize on new opportunities. America cannot meet this century's challenges alone; the world cannot meet them without America" (Obama, 2007).

The main critique of the Bush tenure by Obama was not that it was too focused on the war on terror, but the wrong direction taken by going to Iraq, which distracted the US from the real war going on in Afghanistan. Upon reviewing speeches and publications of Obama before becoming president shows that he was equally against the issue of terrorism and had no intention of holding back. He was in favour of reorganizing the counterterrorism strategy and making it more focused so that it could be effective. At the time when he was a senator for the state of Illinois in 2002, Obama spoke against any possible invasion of Iraq, while giving his support to fighting Al-Qaeda: "After September 11th, after witnessing the carnage and destruction, the dust and the tears, I supported this Administration's pledge to hunt down and root out those who would slaughter innocents in the name of intolerance, and I would willingly take up arms myself to prevent such a tragedy from happening again" (Obama, 2002).

Obama wrote an autobiography titled The Audacity of Hope in 2006, where he admitted that "the effect of September 11 felt profoundly personal" and according to him "chaos had come to our doorstep". In this scenario Obama believed "we would have to answer the call of a nation" and this showed that he was in support of the decision of the Bush administration to wage war against Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan in response to 9/11 events (Obama, 2006). In contrast, Obama has been equally against the Iraq invasion in his writings where he believes that Iraq was a diversion and distraction to the real War on Terror which was to defeat Al-Qaeda. In his 2007 Foreign Affairs article titled "Renewing American Leadership", Obama wrote: "Iraq was a diversion from the fight against the terrorists who struck us on 9/11". Obama reasoned that there was a need to "refocus our efforts on Afghanistan and Pakistan – the central front in our war against Al-Qaeda" (Obama, 2007).

While giving a speech during the election campaign on 15 July 2008, Obama explained his strategy for US foreign policy where he maintained his tough rhetoric against terrorism. In that speech, he again reinforced the need to bolster the efforts against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, not only in Afghanistan but extending to Pakistan. He also mentioned a list of opportunities which were missed by the previous administration believing that "We could have deployed the full force of American power to hunt down and destroy Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, the Taliban, and all of the terrorists responsible for 9/11, while supporting real security in Afghanistan". He

reiterated that the Iraq war "distracts us from every threat that we face and so many opportunities we could seize" and argued that "It is unacceptable that almost seven years after nearly 3,000 Americans were killed on our soil; the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 are still at large" (Obama, 2008a). By the end of 2008, there were approximately 160,734 troops deployed in Iraq, while in Afghanistan 38,427 troops were deployed, almost one-fifth of the troops in Iraq (Figure 4). This further empowered Obama's viewpoint that the real war in Afghanistan was not receiving proper US attention.
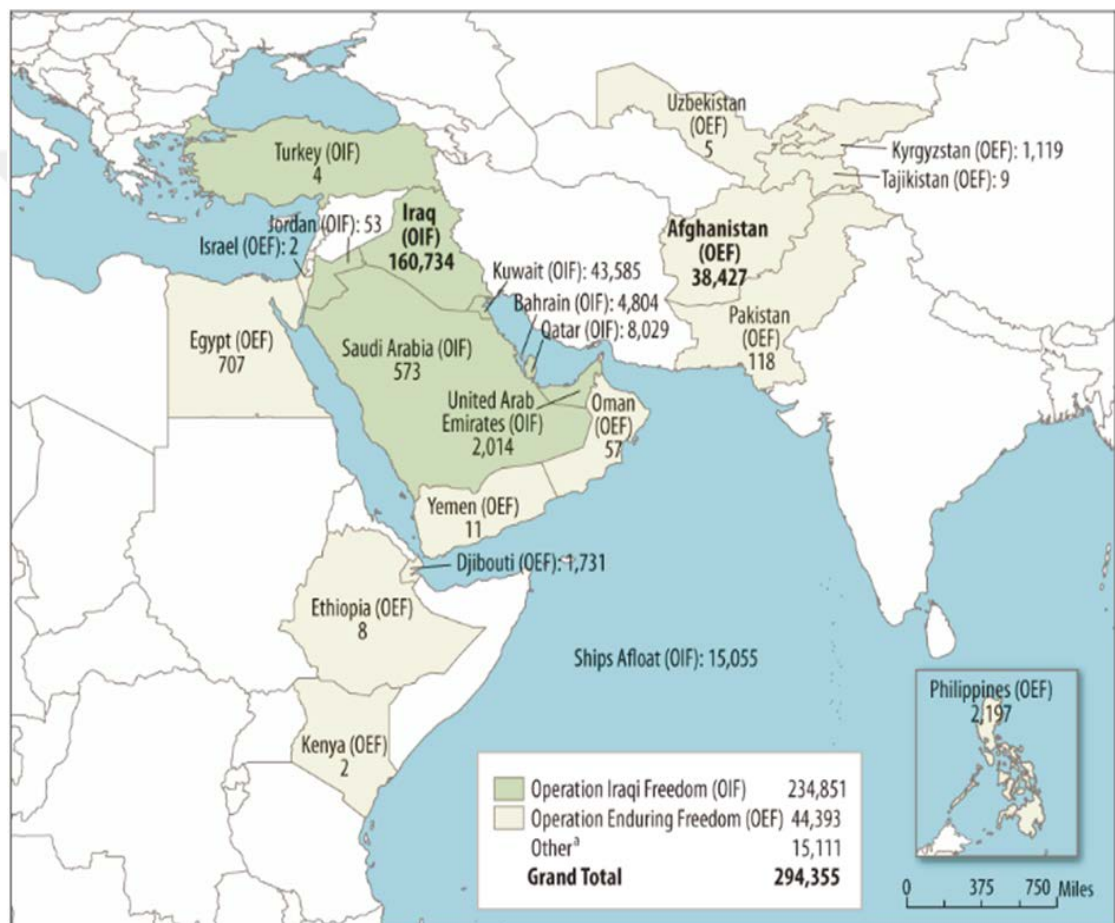
Figure 4: US Troop Deployment for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), December 2008. Source: Belasco, A. (2009, July). Troop levels in the Afghan and Iraq wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential issues. Library of Congress Washington DC Congressional Research Service.

After his inauguration as the President of the US, Obama brought his attention towards what he believed to be the most controversial facets of the Bush administrations during the on-going War on Terror. One of his first actions as President was to sign Executive Orders which prohibited the use of torture on detainees at the infamous Guantanamo Bay detention camp and ordered the shutting of the infamous Guantanamo Bay where most of that torture was carried out though

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this decision could never be realized during his tenure. With carrying out these actions, Obama claimed to "restore the standards of due process and the core constitutional values that have made this country great"; and that these standards could be upheld "even in the midst of war, even in dealing with terrorism". Obama declared that the US would carry out the fight against terrorism in "a manner consistent with our values and our ideals" (Obama, 2009a).

Obama was also determined to bring about a change in strategy in relation to the War on Terror by not using the same vocabulary which was used by the previous government especially the phrase 'War on Terror' which was often used by George W. Bush. Accordingly, Hillary Clinton, then the Secretary of State proclaimed that "The administration has stopped using the phrase and I think that speaks for itself" (Solomon, 2009). As a result, the Obama administration also focused on avoiding particular phrases used by the Bush administration as well as attempting to decrease the profile and significance of the War on Terror by giving importance to other foreign policy issues such as non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

According to a study conducted by Zaki Laïdi, in which the foreign policy discourse of George W. Bush and Barack Obama was compared by collecting and analysing their official speeches, the results of analyses have showed that Bush used the phrase 'War on Terror' seventy-two times while Obama did not even use the phrase once in his first two years of presidency. On the other hand, Obama used the phrase Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) almost nine times more than Bush (See Table 1) (Laïdi, 2012). In following the tradition of previous presidents such as Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan, who saw the area of counterterrorism having unpredictable political risks, Obama strived to bring down the significance of counterterrorism in his foreign policy plans (Naftali, 2005).

Table 1 Comparing key words from the discourses of George W. Bush and Barack Obama

Words that appear in Bush's discourse but are never or seldom used by Obama	**War on Terror: 72 times–0** **Free world: 33 times–1**
Words that appear in Obama's discourse but are never or seldom used by Bush	**Non-Proliferation Treaty NPT (x 9.36)**
Words that appear at least five times more in Bush's discourse than in Obama's discourse	**Democracy (x 7.21)** **Liberty—Freedom (x 6.8)**
Words that appear at least five times more in Obama's discourse than in Bush's discourse	**Climate change (x 5)**
Words that appear 2 to 5 times more in Bush's discourse than in Obama's discourse	**Weapons of mass destruction (x 3.5)**
Words that appear 2 to 5 times more in Obama's discourse than in Bush's discourse	**Al Qaeda (x 2.44)** **Nuclear power (x 2.08)**
Words that appear equally in Bush's and Obama's discourse (once to twice)	**United Nations (Bush x 1.97);** **Security (x 1.84); Peace (x 1.73); War (x 1.65);** **Human rights (Bush x 1.5);** **Terror (Bush x 1.31); NATO (Bush x 1.13)**
Words that do not appear in either Bush's discourse or in Obama's	**Multipolarity, multipolar, multilateralism**

Source: Laïdi, Z. (2012). Limited Achievements: Obama's Foreign Policy. Springer.

4.2. Managing the Withdrawal – Cleaning the Mess

In the late 2008 the US-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement (SoFA) which determined the status of US Military Forces, diplomats and contractors in Iraq was signed by George W. Bush and then Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki committed the United States to withdraw its troops from the country by the end of 2011. Obama was tied by this agreement when he came to office and but still attempted to negotiate a presence for a residual force across 2011. But in 2008 this was a vote by the Iraqi government to end the US occupation (Fitzgerald and Ryan, 2014). After the 2008 US elections, the Bush administration conceded much ground to Maliki, and Obama would have to live with the results. The US elections and financial woes, a US fatigue with even following the war distracted the country from the range of Bush concessions to Maliki. An open-ended US presence was ruled out as the increasingly nationalistic attitude in Baghdad that insisted on and obtained "an unconditional timetable for withdrawal of US forces" (Cockburn, 2008).

The withdrawal agreement was in accordance with Obama's objectives. The costs of the war were huge, the Iraqi government had not invested oil revenue to reconstruction, reconciliation and accommodation within Iraq and any process to these goals was elusive. Obama was insistent that the United States would be leaving the country and turning power over to a sovereign country. Staying in Iraq was against the wills of both the Iraqi population and the American people. Obama stated in July 2008, that on his first day in office "I would give the military a new mission: ending this war." It would not be a precipitous withdrawal and it was essential to US strategic goals (Obama, 2008b). It was fundamentally about ending the unnecessary war and focusing on a more realistic vision of US security. US troops would withdraw from the countryside by mid-2009, most from the country by August 31, 2010, and the remainder by the end of 2011.

Maliki had calculated that there was more political benefit in obtaining the US withdrawal, but there was still internal divisions. The Sunni militia, whose support were so vital to the success of the Surge in 2007, would be vulnerable in the Shia-dominated new political atmosphere. Moreover, it was a Sunni sense of anger at the growing presence of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and their nationalism that first fuelled these sentiments and their opposition to the US occupation. Mohamed al-Dayni, one of the Sunni opponents to SoFA, considered to regret the agreement because it had conferred legitimacy on the United States that they had lacked throughout the occupation; he was also understood as to regret that the Iraqi government conveyed that legitimacy (Rubin and Robinson, 2008).

If the United States could get out legitimately, it sought to enhance its security by diverting attention to Afghanistan and stopping the waste of US resources in Iraq. The crux of the matter was to present the withdrawal as a responsible act. Obama was realistic about the limits of US power in Iraq when he addressed US troops at Camp Lejeune in late February 2009. He set out the three-pronged strategy because he had to address a growing US weakness and the need to reverse and focus. They had to take into account, he said, "the simple reality that America can no longer afford to see Iraq in isolation from other priorities: we face the challenge of refocusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan; of relieving the burden on our military; and of rebuilding our struggling economy" (Obama, 2009b).

According to Obama, the US had done its bit; it was now giving the Iraqis an opportunity. They had fought block by block, year after year and the US could not be responsible for the complete safety and improving of conditions in Iraq. Such was the importance of generating and maintaining a narrative of success and withdrawal that the increasing casualties among Iraqi people and forces was rarely central; even the on-going death of US troops on average every other day represented a formidable change from three years earlier, but hardly a success (Milne, 2009). But there was a balancing act; Obama told US troops at Camp Victory, the day after the heaviest bombing in Baghdad in two years, they had to turn a tanker slowly to maintain the balance between a descent into chaos and a preservation of US safety (Chulov, 2009). Obama continued to generate the narrative, telling the troops that they had given Iraq an opportunity, they had remained focused despite the domestic politics, they had rid the country of Saddam, and they had reduced violence, stabilized the country, and facilitated elections: "that is an extraordinary achievement". It was time to leave. Because in addition to stability, Iraq was not a safe haven for terrorists, it was a good neighbour and ally, "we can start bringing our folks home" (Obama, 2009c).

On August 31, 2010, Obama celebrated the historic moment, the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the end of the combat mission, but not of the commitment to Iraq. Yet he seemed to wipe his hands of the accountability: "through this remarkable chapter in the history of the United States and Iraq, we have met our responsibility. Now, it's time to turn the page" (Obama, 2010). Beyond the commitment, there was nothing specific on reparations, compensation, or truth commissions. Iraqis would be the authors of the new script. Washington had to turn its attention to the on-going security challenges and to "rebuild our nation here at home" (Fitzgerald and Ryan, 2014). According to John McCain, in Obama's narrative, the withdrawal from Iraq was about restoration, yet this questionably premature withdrawal was also about "defeat disguised as a timetable" (Gardner, 2013). Obama had recognized the country was "travelling through rough waters" but US troops give the people the reassurance that their "course is true" and "beyond the pre-dawn darkness, better days lie ahead" (Obama, 2010).

4.3. Post-war Iraq and the Costs of an "Unnecessary War"

The future was not too clear in Iraq. The March 2010 parliamentary elections, praised by the United States but resulted in a standoff and irresolution of political problems. Ayad Allawi, head of the Iraqiya bloc, secured more votes than Maliki. Though officially the US did not support any candidate, it initially backed Maliki but then switched to support Allawi with demands for a power sharing arrangement, but ultimately reverting to Maliki. While technically desirable for the Americans, it undermined the sovereignty of the political process and also paved the way for ever increasing influence of Iran as a powerbroker in the Iraqi domestic politics. Allawi's deputy, Osama al-Najaifi, depicted the US withdrawal as part of a consolidation of Iranian influence after the US withdrawal and the further ascendancy of Shia control, as Maliki visited both Tehran and Damascus during this period. Leaving the post-electoral turmoil in place satisfied Tehran because they did not want to see the United States leave on schedule with a viable government in place; it was crucial for them to demonstrate that the United States had not succeeded (Chulov, 2010).

Far from the clarity on the end of responsibilities, five months after the Iraqi elections there was no government in place. Maliki was widely accused of running a dictatorship; building his own base, abuse of power, and a range of other violent activities that curtailed Iraqi freedoms, the press, and the deaths on the streets continue. The transition represented a remarkable period of apprehension. Christopher Hill, the departing US Ambassador to Iraq, tried to conclude a deal before he left, but the prospects of instability and ethnic warfare continued. According to Anthony Shadid, the failures of the elite that the US chose "may serve as a lasting American legacy here, raising fundamental questions about the body politic it leaves behind as the American military departs by 2012" (Shadid, 2010).

The sectarian violence contradicted the perception that Iraq had been freed and that the US mission had ended. To be sure Obama's people in the administration kept talking about long-term commitments and the importance of civilian engagement under the direction of the State Department rather than military engagement under the Pentagon; through a surge of contractors and State Department security forces that jumped from 2,700 to 7,000 (Milne, 2010). But US power and influence within Iraq were severely diminished. The constitutional arrangements that

sought power-sharing in Iraq's context, as Seamus Milne argues, "laid the ground for a national maelstrom'" exacerbated by Al-Qaeda's presence that had been non-existent before the US invasion. "The virus of Sunni-Shia confrontation then spread throughout the region, feeding the Arab 'cold war' that now splits Lebanese, Palestinians and states across the Middle East. This was a classic colonial divide and rule strategy that bought the US occupation time and brought Iraqis misery". Milne says "There is no question that the US has suffered a strategic defeat in Iraq. Far from turning the country into a forward base for the transformation of the region on western lines, it became a global demonstration of the limits of American military power" (Milne, 2009).

Even before he became president, Obama was aware that the transition would lead to further violence, yet he also recognized that he was making a choice between two bad options because the continued US presence also contributed to on-going violence. The surge-level force commitment could not be sustained, given US domestic and strategic priorities. Obama did try to negotiate adjustments to the SoFA across 2011 as the final deadline approached, and reserved the right to consider the situation on the ground to slow or to redeploy US troops (Fitzgerald and Ryan, 2014). But in Toby Dodge's view, "this caveat is intended to guarantee the safety of US troops and American interests, not the stability of Iraq itself". Further, if the United States did intervene if sectarian violence increased, in effect they would be there to create 'safe havens' and solidifying "the ethnic cleansing of the country" (Dodge, 2008).

By 2012, the war had cost the lives of over 4000 US troops, with more than 32,000 wounded; 100,000 Iraqis killed and two million displaced. The war drained the US treasury of $1 trillion; some estimates reaching to $3 trillion (Bilmes and Stiglitz, 2010). US national debt rose dramatically, the precipitous rise in the costs of oil and the direct costs of war aggravated the attempts to recover from recession. According to Peter Hahn, the US share of global gross domestic product fell from 32 percent to 24 percent between the years 2000 and 2010, "a rate of relative national economic decline surpassed in world history only by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991" (Hahn, 2012). According to the Department of Defense, by 2014 the US figures had risen to 4,427 killed and 34,275 injured. The suicide rate among US Iraqi veterans was also high. The journal *PLOS Medicine* added in late 2013 that Iraqi

fatalities could be set at roughly 461,000 for the years between 2003 and 2011 (Hagopian *et al.*, 2013).

The Obama administration was criticized for its uninterested approach to the negotiations that sought to leave a remnant force in the country. The Secretary of Defense Robert Gates favoured a US military presence after the withdrawal date; he thought it was important to keep Iraq stable, to continue the US training and support, "and to signal our friends in the region − and Iran − that we weren't abandoning the field" (Gates, 2014). Yet Maliki and most Iraqis wanted the United States out. After the United States failed to secure immunity from prosecution for its troops in 2011, its withdrawal was completed by the end of the year (Landler, 2011). Not only did the violence and human rights abuses continue to increase, much of it perpetrated by the US-backed government. On the other hand, the government itself was not only deadlocked for a time but then also became increasingly authoritarian. Maliki's authority and dominance not only grew, but took on increasingly repressive tactics (Fitzgerald and Ryan, 2014). According to Dodge, there were a rise of coercion and authoritarianism and a dominance of the military institutions. The situation in Iraq after US withdrawal remained comparable to the situation prior to 2003 and the decision of regime change. Yet hundreds of thousands had been killed and the situation remained incredibly fragile, that was bought "at an unimaginably high cost" by the Americans (Dodge, 2013). Unfortunately, like the Vietnam War, Washington walked away with few international questions about its responsibility and commitments. Ending the war responsibly for Obama was an entirely America-centered concern. Like Vietnam, the US had washed its hand of the problem and it was left to the regional parties to fight it out. The immediate strategic beneficiaries of the Iraq War turned out to be Iran and to various extents Hamas, Hezbollah, and Syria.

4.4. Obama Doctrine: 'Leading from Behind'

The alleged shift in US foreign policy under Obama since 2009 has been the subject of heated debate. After two terms of expansive US foreign policy under George W. Bush, guided by the belief that the United States had to be able to project force overseas unilaterally in defence of its own and its allies' national interests, Obama's approach to foreign and security policy initially appeared be non-

interventionist as the administration's attention being directed more towards domestic affairs (Lindsay, 2011). In this period facing the devastating experience of two costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, with US taxpayers and service personnel carrying the principal burden, Obama was adamant that in a context of austerity and globalization, military action had to be, first, limited to the defence of vital US interests and, second, had to be carried out by a leaner, more flexible military force acting not unilaterally but multilaterally in cooperation with local allies (Gerges, 2013). It was not necessarily the objectives of US foreign policy that changed, but rather the means chosen to achieve them (Manyin *et al*., 2012).

In Daniel Drezner's view, Obama's primary strategic approach to foreign and security policy has been driven by the maxim of "multilateral retrenchment", a principle "designed to curtail the United States' overseas commitments, restore its standing in the world, and shift burdens onto global partners" (Drezner, 2011). Thus, the Obama administration has primarily been trying to maintain its foreign posture by means not solely reliant on military power or presence. However, given the complexity of the operating environment and the domestic constraints in play, the use of force employed by the Obama administration has been of a different nature (Krieg, 2016). The two most important factors determining the Obama administration's approach to military action have been austerity and an increasingly war-fatigued American public. The latter factor has been shaped by the aftermath of what have been often referred to as "wars of choice" –the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that involved 2 million servicemen and women, left 6,000 Americans dead and 40,000 wounded, and cost more than US$1.5 trillion (Haass, 2013). The legacy of these conflicts left the Obama administration with few military courses of action to choose from: any military action undertaken had to be off the public radar, cost-efficient and a matter of last resort in protection of vital US national interests. Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta laid out the implications of this strategic norm for US force structure: "As we reduce the overall defence budget, we will protect and in some cases increase our investments in special operations forces, new technologies like unmanned systems, space and in particular cyberspace capabilities and in the capacity to quickly mobilize" (Pilkington, 2012).

The core principle of the Obama Doctrine is burden-sharing, both strategically and operationally. On the strategic level, it emphasizes the need for

collective action through coalition warfare and for capacity-building of local partners and allies (National Security Strategy, 2015). On the operational level, it prioritizes covert warfare, relying increasingly on technological platforms, Special Forces operations and CIA operatives to achieve strategic and operational objectives out of the public eye (Boyle, 2015). For Andreas Krieg, the post-Iraq US policy towards the Middle East appears to be testimony to the doctrinal shift to waging war by surrogate in the absence of vital national interests (Krieg, 2016).

Since President Obama came into office, US relations with the Middle East have been conducted in the context of the administration's alleged "pivot towards Asia" approach. From the outset, the administration highlighted the importance of Asia for US national interests in all dimensions. However, that is not to say that a US focus on Asia was ever intended to come at the expense of the US commitment to the Middle East. In fact, Obama's overall grand strategy was not about fundamentally redefining the core objectives of US foreign and security policy but rather about reconsidering how to achieve them (Manyin *et* al., 2012). Nonetheless, the rhetorical accentuation of Asia unsettled many US allies in the Middle East, who feared that after the disengagement from Iraq and Afghanistan the region would be left to its own devices (Haass, 2013). In the event, instead of disengaging from the Middle East, the US has changed the nature of its engagement –as it has across the spectrum of conflict in the world at large (Haass and Indyk, 2009).

It was the so-called Arab Spring that primarily challenged Obama's strategic approach to the Middle East, suddenly propelling the region back to the top of the US foreign policy agenda. As Haass wrote in 2013: "Now that most Americans want little to do with the greater Middle East, US officials are finding it difficult to turn away" (Haass, 2013). Nonetheless, it is important to note that although key regional partners were affected by the socio-political upheavals in the region, vital US national interests were never at stake before the rise of ISIS in 2014 (Gerges, 2013). And even since then, the definition of the ISIS threat appears vague from a US point of view, as both the jihadists' actions and their narratives focus primarily on changing the socio-political authority structure in the region. Consequently, the Obama administration has been wary of getting sucked into the quagmire of leading major combat operations against an organization that is considered to pose a threat mainly to local communities and populations. Thus, while western media have

arguably created a threat hype about the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), (Timm, 2015) most analysts and experts, including those in uniform, have expressed scepticism about the ISIS threat to US homeland security, aside from the "lone wolf" phenomenon of terrorism (Weisgerber, 2015).

A more direct form of surrogate (proxy) warfare has been the US military assistance delivered to Arab allies in the Middle East, most notably Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf states (Wezeman and Wezeman, 2015). While the US policy of training, equipping and advising militaries in the Middle Eastern context is decades old, the Obama administration is the first to have relied directly on Arab military capabilities to contain regional threats. During the NATO-led Libya campaign, the United States provided key capabilities to its allies in the air. At the same time, it granted the Qatari and UAE armed forces its tacit approval to train and equip Libyan rebel forces on the ground to operate in conjunction with coalition air power (Black, 2011).

The same approach of supporting regional friendly states in the Middle East to get involved in conflicts is mostly valid in the Syrian civil war as well. Gulf States have been involved in training and equipping Syrian rebel forces in their fight against the Assad regime since 2012 (Bakr, 2014). Here, the Gulf States acted as Washington's surrogate in liaising with the opposition and supporting them. In the case of Yemen, it was regional allies that carried out Operation Decisive Storm in April 2015, bringing their military capability to bear, with the United States merely providing logistical and intelligence support (Kirkpatrick, 2015). The United States has also directly employed non-state actors as surrogates on the ground. In Syria it has trained and equipped units of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and moderate rebel brigades such as the Harakat al-Hazm. In northern Iraq, US Special Forces have provided training and support to Kurdish *peshmerga* fighters to act as surrogates on the ground against ISIS militants (Parkinson and Nissenbaum, 2014).

Technology is another major surrogate for the United States in the Middle Eastern theatre. In an effort to avoid putting boots on the ground, the Obama administration has relied heavily on manned and unmanned air power. In operations in Libya, Syria and Iraq, the US military has externalized operational risks to conventional air power platforms that can eliminate targets with impunity from high altitude. The Obama administration has also massively extended the armed drone programme, with significant effects on US kinetic engagement in the Middle East

(Krieg, 2016). Unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) have become a central feature of US covert operations, providing air cover for special forces on the ground and, more often than not, operating as a stand-alone platform as part of the US counterterrorism strategy (Kaag and Kreps, 2014). UCAVs have been deployed in the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, against the Gaddafi regime in Libya, against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen, and against Al-Shabaab militias in Somalia. (Miklaszewski and Kube, 2014; Barnes, 2011; Turse, 2012; Krieg, 2016).

The most important factor in US decision-making had arguably been the relationship between urgency and costs in the Obama period. The multiple crises in the Middle East were perceived as not urgent enough in terms of vital US national interests and humanitarian considerations to merit intervention on that basis alone. While the Obama administration has rhetorically condemned the humanitarian crises in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, these events have not mobilized sufficient public pressure at home to justify the deployment of US ground troops. At the same time, the anticipated financial and human costs of a joint force intervention in Syria, Iraq and Yemen were also considerable (Haass, 2013).

Taking into account the US public's hostility to major combat operations in the Middle Eastern arena, any direct military intervention in these theatres would generate substantial political costs for the administration at home (Landler and Thee-Brenan, 2013). The key aspect in this respect is perceived public opposition to the use of ground troops, not just because of the financial costs their deployment entails for any US administration but, more importantly, because of the potential political costs arising from the return of dead bodies (Krieg, 2016). Also, there is the aspect of legitimacy and the idea that local forces are better able to achieve objectives in a highly complex environment where they are more effectively integrated into the local social fabric. The US or any western ground troops will always be seen as foreign invaders in the Middle East, even if their objectives are humanitarian in nature (Walt, 2017). Consequently, surrogates can achieve objectives on behalf of the United States as an external patron without the potentially inflammatory effect of introducing US ground troops.

The policy of "leading from behind" had a range of strategic and operational consequences for the United States. Aside from not sending troops in the battlefield and being cost effective, most of the consequences ended up being detrimental

towards the cause. First, the reliance on surrogates involves the delegation of authority and action to substitutes, who have the discretion to use the delegated authority as they see fit. Patrons have very few means available to them to exercise direct control or oversight over the surrogate. Regardless of the degree of cooperation between patron and surrogate on the strategic or operational level, surrogates are ultimately autonomous actors who always have an agenda of their own to pursue (Borghard, 2014) Second, surrogate warfare often does not allow for direct operational integration and coordination. As a consequence, operations are not conducted with a high degree of synergy (Huber, 2002). This is particularly true for operations between patron air power and surrogate ground forces.

Third, surrogates bear the risk of prolonging the conflict by either escalating the situation or merely tipping the balance of power in the wrong direction (Cunningham, 2010). Money, commodities and arms provided by the patron, particularly to non-state surrogates, might be diverted into the hands of individual strongmen, tribal, rebel or ideological leaders attempting to strengthen their personal standing *vis-à-vis* partners and competitors. Widespread corruption fuels war economies, where the primary interests of key local actors might not be a swift solution of the conflict but power and control over resources. Hence, by escalating existing conflicts or indirectly fuelling underlying causes of conflict, support for surrogates can bring the risk of the United States having to get involved militarily itself to stop a conflict that an unsuccessful policy of surrogate warfare has exacerbated. The US policy of backing the regime in Baghdad in its fight against ISIS and Sunni insurgency meant that Iranian-backed militias have de facto become indirect tacit surrogates of Obama's Iraq policy. Not only have these surrogates intensified the conflict on the ground; they have caused the US to gradually augment its troop presence in Iraq – thereby causing the patron to get sucked back into the war (Krieg, 2016).

Fourth, the employment of technological surrogates has undermined US strategy. In particular, the drone programme, which has been expanded under the Obama administration, has had adverse results in theatre. The targeted killing of suspected insurgents and terrorists from the air, jeopardizing the lives of civilians with limited host state supervision, has created widespread public antagonism towards the United States in fragile insurgency environments (Hudson *et* al., 2011).

The consequent loss of hearts and minds not only increases the social base of insurgents and terrorists but, worse, weakens the local authority structure in already failing states (Boyle, 2015). In Yemen and Pakistan in particular, US overreliance on UCAVs has worked against the overall US counterterrorist and counterinsurgency strategy respectively.

Finally, surrogate warfare in the Middle East has had a less than positive impact on the strategic reputation and moral standing of the United States in the world (Hughes, 2012). On the strategic side, the US under Obama has lost its ability to deter or coerce players in the region –thereby undermining its claim to global superpower status (Krieg, 2014). Partners and potential adversaries alike have lost faith in its ability and willingness to do what is necessary to directly protect and secure its interests in the region. Most notably, partners in the Gulf and Israel, who have traditionally looked to the United States as an external protector, fear that Obama's policy rationale of delegation through the empowerment of surrogates will leave them having to cater for their own security independently (Ghitis, 2015). Both human and technological surrogates have generated effects that are questionable under the laws of armed conflict or in some instances may even constitute war crimes. US manned and unmanned air power has occasionally killed civilians indiscriminately, while Shiite militias and Libyan and Syrian rebels have been involved in gross human rights abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2015). The strategy of surrogate warfare was an advantage for Obama on the domestic front where the public was content that the troops were not being sent and tax payer money was saved. But, on the other hand, it gave fewer successes on the International front because of lack of coherence with the forces on the ground as well as killing innocent civilians in drone attacks.

CHAPTER 5: MOVING ON FROM IRAQ: OBAMA'S OTHER POLICY INITIATIVES – SAVING THE FACE

Finishing the War against Terror was not the only foreign policy initiative on Obama's agenda. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had clearly damaged America's standing in the world as well as increasing public displeasure at home because of worsening economy. The Obama administration also wanted to improve that standing by taking domestic and foreign policy initiatives. In this chapter some of the other initiatives taken by the Obama will be analysed.

5.1. Domestic Policy Initiatives

Obama's first major new recommendation to Congress was for an $800-billion economic stimulus package: the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. About one-third of the money involved grants to state governments to keep them from laying off public employees or reducing unemployment compensation; about one-third was for middle-class tax cuts; and about a third went for bridges, highways, sewage treatment facilities, and other infrastructure projects. The latter category included tens of billions of dollars to spur research and development of renewable sources of energy, especially wind and solar. These sectors flourished in the years that followed and came to occupy a rapidly growing share of the nation's overall energy usage. Although Obama hoped to pass the Recovery Act with bipartisan support, not a single Republican House member and only three Republican senators voted for it. Democratic control of Congress was strong enough to secure its passage, however, and President Obama signed the act into law on February 17, 2009.

The president's economic policies worked, leaving behind a relatively strong economy when he left office in 2017. The policies averted a possible, even probable, free fall into another Great Depression. During the remainder of his tenure, a net 11.3 million new jobs were created, the unemployment rate fell from 10 percent to less than 5 percent, inflation and interest rates remained low, the major stock indexes more than doubled, and the annual federal budget deficit fell from more than $1.4 trillion to less than $600 billion. In 2015 wages, heretofore a lagging element of the economic recovery, began to grow faster than inflation—indeed, the income of middle-class (by 5 percent) and lower-end (by 8 percent) workers rose more sharply than in any year since the Census Bureau began tracking the numbers in 1967

(Nelson, 2019). Still, the annual economic growth rate did not exceed 2 percent at any time during Obama's presidency and the trend toward growing income inequality between the wealthiest Americans and the rest of the population grew, fuelling widespread political discontent among voters.

Obama also sought to enact a major reform of the nation's health care system. He decided that his best chance of success was during his first year in office, when his popularity was likely to be at its highest and the Democrats enjoyed strong majorities in both houses of Congress. Still, he faced hurdles from Republicans and also within his own party as to what type of coverage it should be, public or private. The president, frustrated that he was not getting through to the American people, decided to speak to the nation in a prime-time address to the Congress on September 9, 2009. "The plan I'm announcing tonight would meet three basic goals," Obama declared. "It will provide more security and stability to those who have health insurance. It will provide insurance to those who don't. And it will slow the growth of health care costs for our families, our businesses, and our government" (Obama, 2009d).

The speech succeeded in arresting the months-long decline in public and congressional support for reform. In this altered political environment, the president launched a successful campaign to persuade members of the Congress in face-to-face meetings. By year's end, both houses of the Congress had passed different versions of health care reform legislation. Controversy over the Affordable Care Act (ACA) did not end when Congress enacted it. After Republicans won control of the House in the 2010 midterm elections, they began voting regularly to repeal it. When the Republican Party gained a majority of the Senate in 2014, that chamber joined the repeal effort. In January 2016, Obama vetoed the first repeal bill that the Congress sent him.

President Obama's other domestic policy initiatives during his first term included Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's Race to the Top program, which created a competition among the states for $4.5 billion in extra funding tied to public school reforms authorizing more charter schools and tying teacher evaluations to student learning. The Republican takeover of the House of Representatives in the 2010 midterm election brought an end to Obama's period of dramatic legislative accomplishment. He lacked the majority needed to pass bills through the House, and

the Democratic majority in the Senate was not large enough to overcome Republican filibusters, which require a three-fifths vote to be brought to a close. As a result of the 2014 midterm election, Obama faced a Republican majority in both congressional chambers during his final two years in office, bringing the legislative process almost to a standstill.

5.2. International Policy Initiatives

From the beginning, the new administration sought more active engagement with Asia, trying to improve US ties with friends and allies and cooperating with China on bilateral, regional, and global issues. The Obama team accepted that China's relative importance in the world was growing and that the United States could no longer exercise the degree of leverage that it had previously. Obama's resulting "strategic pivot" to Asia, announced in November 2011, was an attempt to generate confidence in the United States' future leadership role in the region, something many there had begun to doubt (Indyk, Lieberthal and O'Hanlon, 2012).

To promote this goal, the United States and China have launched an unprecedented number of dialogues and exchanges, including the Strategic and Economic Dialogue, which held its fifth round in July 2013, while also using informal leaders' meetings, like the recent Sunnylands summit between President Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping, or bilateral engagements on the sidelines of multilateral meetings (Campbell and Andrews, 2013). These mechanisms were not created merely for dialogue's sake, but rather to find tangible ways for the United States and China to cooperate in advancing shared regional and global interests, including on the most difficult security challenges like North Korea and Iran.

Despite concentrated attention, however, the administration's efforts to work more closely with China have not gone smoothly. A major reason for that has been the inability to mitigate distrust over each other's long-term intentions. Almost every American policy is seen by most in Beijing as part of a sophisticated conspiracy to frustrate China's rise. Washington, meanwhile, has increasingly been disconcerted by these Chinese views and concerned that Beijing seeks to use its economic and growing military power in Asia to achieve both diplomatic and security advantages at the United States' expense (Indyk, Lieberthal and O'Hanlon, 2012). Washington was also well aware that almost every other country in Asia wanted the United States

to help counter balance the growing Chinese pressures, but not at the cost of making them choose between the two giants.

Another aspect of the "Obama Doctrine" was to take strategic risks to reduce tension with adversaries. It rejects the use of force solely as a means to prove credibility, asserts that the United States cannot fix all problems, and maintains that multilateralism is preferable. Hard power does not disappear but becomes a secondary tactic. Dialogue and negotiation is more prominent (Weeks, 2016). With regard to Russia, the Obama administration began pursuing a diplomatic "reset" shortly after entering office in January 2009 in an attempt to move beyond the East-West confrontation over Moscow's invasion and occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia in August 2008. The administration hoped to restore diplomatic cooperation with Russia along a number of avenues where there appeared to be common interests, including nuclear arms reductions, counterterrorism, and Iran's nuclear program (Baker, 2013).

The reset achieved only limited success, in part because Moscow has chosen to employ military force as a means of restoring Russian prestige, often at the expense of Western interests most notably in Ukraine (Deni, 2015). The Obama administration had been careful to avoid overly militarizing its response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its invasion of the Donbas region in the eastern Ukraine (Wilson, 2014). Since Ukraine was not a treaty ally, the American response with regard to the new government in Kyev was limited to providing nonlethal aid, technical assistance to improve governance and energy security, and strong diplomatic support. At the same time, the United States and the EU together imposed an array of economic sanctions on Russia. The only military dimension of Washington's policy has been to reassure treaty allies Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania with relatively small-scale deployments of American troops, roughly 100-120 soldiers in each, and increased exercises conducted by US forces based in Europe as well as some rotationally deployed forces from the continental United States (Busvine and Prentice, 2015). Throughout the crisis though, President Obama had been clear in his intention of avoiding a military confrontation with Russia. "I will look at all additional options that are available to us short of military confrontation," the President said during a news conference in January 2015, as the

fighting between the Ukrainian army and Russian-supported separatists flared again (Busvine and Prentice, 2015).

The history of US policy toward Cuba after the Cuban Revolution in 1959 is likely the most documented bilateral relationship between the United States and any other Latin American country. In the context of the early Cold War, US policy under Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy progressed rapidly from suspicious engagement to fostering regime change. The foundation of US policy soon after the revolution was that the Castro regime represented a surrogate (proxy) encroachment of the Soviet Union in the Western Hemisphere. Hard power was the backbone, including economic sanctions, covert action, and invasion, of the US foreign policy reacting the changes after the revolution. US policy toward Cuba has followed a well-known path of attempting to isolate the country, with the economic embargo, a series of laws initiated in 1960 and expanded in 1962, serving as a foundation. The original stated purpose of the embargo was to squeeze Cuba economically to the point that Cubans would rise against Fidel Castro (Weeks, 2016). While on the campaign trail, Obama made speeches calling for engagement with Cuba and other Latin American countries, arguing that "it is time to pursue direct diplomacy, with friend and foe alike, without preconditions" (Zeleny, 2008).

In April 2009, only three months after assuming office, President Obama announced the lifting of restrictions on remittances and family travel to Cuba, while licensing US satellite and telecommunications providers to engage with the island. Freedom of movement, therefore, became a priority. Four days later, the president gave a speech at the opening of the Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain, echoing the theme of engaging with adversaries: "Over the past two years, I've indicated, and I repeat today, that I'm prepared to have my administration engage with the Cuban government on a wide range of issues – from drugs, migration, and economic issues, to human rights, free speech, and democratic reform. Now, let me be clear, I'm not interested in talking just for the sake of talking. But I do believe that we can move US-Cuban relations in a new direction" (The White House, 2009).

Pope Francis also had a hand in bringing the two states together, initially writing a letter to both Barack Obama and to Raul Castro asking them to resolve the case of Alan Gross and also the three remaining Cuban Five, who were Cuban intelligence agents who were arrested in the United States in 1998 and convicted of

espionage as well as other charges, while also encouraging the two countries to develop a closer relationship (Miller 2014). Representatives from the United States and Cuba worked 18 months to get the prisoners released and diplomatic relations thawed. On December 17, 2014 the president announced the launch of diplomatic normalization, noting that it would "end an out-dated approach that, for decades, has failed to advance our interests" (The White House 2014). That announcement was followed by President Obama visiting Havana in March 2015, the first president to do so since Calvin Coolidge during his presidency in the early 20th century.

Obama's policy towards Iran was another move away from traditional US foreign policy. From 2009 onward, Obama averred that a nuclear Iran was unacceptable. Over time, and partially under pressure from the Congress, he would employ powerful coercive levers including economic sanctions and, reportedly, cyber-attacks to compel Tehran to halt its nuclear program. Yet Obama also sought to engage with Tehran diplomatically, first by offering to conduct direct and unconditional talks with the regime in 2009, and later by complementing increased pressure with persistent diplomatic outreach, both bilateral and multilateral. Tactically, Obama did so to enlist broader international support for economic sanctions and other pressures. More fundamentally, he did so to locate a peaceful, positive-sum solution to the nuclear issue, and to demonstrate that diplomacy could provide imperfect but acceptable ways of protecting US interests at much lower cost than military force. "Part of our goal here has been to show that diplomacy can work," Obama explained (Baker, 2015).

The administration's blend of coercion, international coalition building, and engagement did eventually deliver a nuclear deal with Iran in 2015. That deal was imperfect in many ways, and it left open the question of what would happen after its key provisions expired. But provided that Tehran adhered to the deal, it nonetheless froze and/or rolled back key aspects of Iran's nuclear program for at least a decade, far longer than any military intervention might have accomplished, and at far less cost. In doing so, it averted, or at least significantly delayed, the twin nightmare scenarios US planners had long feared: another major military conflict in the Middle East, or an Iran that was largely unconstrained in pursuit of the bomb (Jervis, 2015). The nuclear deal thus illustrated that coercive diplomacy, when pursued with focus and persistence, could yield constructive results in the post-Iraq context.

Unfortunately, the Iran deal also illustrated prominent dangers that accompanied that endeavour. One critique of Obama's diplomacy has been that the administration often became so invested in its search for agreement with adversaries that it lost leverage either in the negotiations themselves or in the broader bilateral relationship (Brands, 2016). It appears that Obama encountered this problem vis-à-vis Iran. During the negotiations, the administration retreated fairly significantly on important side issues such as limits on Iran's ballistic missile program. Moreover, although Obama could be quite tough in applying nuclear-related pressures, based on published reports he seems not to have embedded those pressures within a broader program for pushing back against increasingly assertive Iranian behaviour throughout the region, such as its growing influence with the sectarian, Shia-led government in Baghdad, its support for Houthi rebels in Yemen, and its intervention in Syria on behalf of Assad. The widespread perception among US partners, at least, was that the quest for a nuclear deal was helping Iran become ascendant in the Middle East, while the United States was retreating after Iraq (Solomon, 2016).

This perception related to a second problem, which was that the Iran negotiations caused significant fallout between Washington and its regional partners. An inherent dilemma of engaging enemies is that it can discomfit insecure friends. Although the administration sought to counter this dynamic via arms sales and other security assistance to Israel and key Gulf states, it was never particularly successful. In fact, Obama's undisguised ambivalence toward partners like Saudi Arabia, as well as the perception of retrenchment fostered by US withdrawal from Iraq and the failure to strike Syria after Assad's chemical weapons attacks in 2013, made it even harder to reassure those partners that the nuclear deal did not presage a larger regional realignment that would empower Iran at their expense. That belief, in turn, apparently contributed to panicked behaviour by an exposed Saudi Arabia, whose effort to push back unilaterally against Tehran in early 2015 led it into a war in Yemen that further destabilized the region (Trofimov, 2015). Engagement with Tehran thus provided an acceptable solution to the nuclear issue at the time, but it complicated containment of Iran's regional influence including in Iraq, and tested America's own regional relationships with various allies. Diplomacy with adversaries can be a double-edged sword; Obama's strategy demonstrated the possibilities and perils of that endeavour.

On the Palestine-Israel issue, Obama was quite hopeful of a solution at first. In his landmark June 2009 speech at Cairo University, Obama told a captivated audience that he intended to reset US relations with the Muslim world after the Bush administration. It is "undeniable that the Palestinian people—Muslims and Christians—have suffered in pursuit of a homeland". "For more than sixty years they've endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighbouring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead." This, Obama declared, was an intolerable situation for the Palestinians and he vowed, "America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own" (Obama, 2009e).

His remarks were and remain today the most sympathetic by a sitting US president on Israel's dispossession of Palestinians (Ruebner, 2016). As a result, the pro-Israel lobby, which has significant influence in US politics, attacked Obama for going too far in pressuring the right-wing Israeli government led by Benjamin Netanyahu (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007). Pro-Likud voices (pro-Israel hardliners), in the United States denounced the Cairo speech as "a renunciation of America's strategic alliance with Israel" (Glick, 2009). Secretary of State at the time, Hillary Clinton demanded a halt to Israeli settlements in May 2009, saying that the president "wants to see a stop to settlements—not some settlements, not outposts, not natural growth exceptions" (Clinton, 2009). As a response, the pro-Israel lobby struck back in a fury. That same month, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) mobilized the Congress, and 76 senators and 328 representatives signed letters politely telling the president to stop airing dirty laundry with Israel in public and back off his demand for a total settlement freeze (Ruebner, 2016).

Netanyahu and his even more hard-line coalition partners do not recognize the need for a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians. Even though Netanyahu had met various times with President Obama in Washington, he had refused to listen to both Obama and Hillary Clinton on the settlement freezes, and Obama had backed down three times after confrontations with Netanyahu. Obama's failure to maintain pressure on Netanyahu bitterly disappointed opinion leaders in the Arab and Muslim world, and has confirmed a widely-held belief among Arabs that Obama represents continuity more than change in US foreign policy towards the region (Gerges, 2012).

The Congress could prefer to be rather indifferent or apathetic when it comes to intervening in Libya, as it was the case in 2011; but when it comes to Israel, the Congress is a major actor that involves in the foreign policy making processes.

According to Walt and Mearsheimer, the Congress always fights presidents who deviate from a pro-Israeli line, whether George H. W. Bush or Obama (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007). The pro-Israel lobby, which includes not only AIPAC but also Christian fundamentalists and large segments of the military-industrial complex, lobbies the Congress effectively. The lobby funds the campaigns of pro-Israel candidates or focuses on the critics of Israel to destroy their candidacies. Many legislators are financially dependent on this lobby. J Street the other lobby which represents parts of the Jewish community is more liberal but much less influential whereas Jewish Voice for Peace has very little clout in the Congress. US public opinion is also very much uninformed of the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and tends to feel closer to Israel, a Western nation, than to the Palestinians (Guerlain, 2014).

5.3. Bush and Obama – Different or Similar?

For a president elected upon an apparent platform of change, the foreign policy of the forty-fourth president, Barack Obama, has demonstrated a surprising degree of continuity with that of his predecessor, George W. Bush. Obama failed to appreciate the demands of holding office whilst campaigning and adjusted accordingly once elected; and was structurally limited in the change that was possible. Obama has been unable to institute greater change because of the enduring structures of the international system, War on Terror and domestic cultural and political landscape within which he is located. These structures take a variety of forms, such as the relative material declining of American power; the institutionalised nature of the "War on Terror"; and the hegemonic discourses of terror that were established shortly after 9/11 and continue to be defended today (Bentley and Holland, 2013).

Obama has had success where he has continued the policy undertaken by the previous government. Firstly, Obama dropped the "Global War on Terror" label, but proceeded on the same trail made by Bush when it came to the legal reasoning behind it including an expansive view of presidential power and detention policies, to

unilateral drone strikes wherever terrorists are found, or to the use of Special Forces raids to target high-value individuals. The achievements the Obama Administration is rightly most proud of the elimination of a solid number of high-level Al-Qaeda officials, including of course Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan are a direct result of continuing the War on Terror along this aggressive path. Secondly, Obama's adoption of a surge in the number troops to allow for a better resourced counterinsurgency campaign against the Taliban was the same option recommended by the Bush-era strategy reviews of 2008 (Feaver and Popescu, 2012). The only difference between Obama and Bush was on the Iraq invasion, other than that both had similar solutions towards fighting terrorism.

Other than terrorism, where Obama tried to move away from the Bush era, there were failures. Firstly, he failed in his reset of relations with Russia with almost no positive outcome of the strategy. Secondly, his plan for a peace settlement between Israel and Palestine was heavily opposed by Israel and subsequently by the Congress. But in this case, he was more hampered by the fact that his party had lost the majority in the Congress by 2011 during his first campaign. His apparent inability to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay stands out as the clearest example of his failings. Obama was elected having campaigned to shut Guantanamo and, on taking office, signed executive orders for the detention facility's closure, as well as forbidding the use of torture by the United States. There are two major stumbling blocks preventing Obama from fulfilling his promise of closing the detention facilities: one due to the legacy he inherited and the other relating to resistance in the US Congress. This showed that change was something Obama alone could not do.

But, however, he did manage to achieve certain successes during his tenure, most notably being the Iran nuclear in the face of fierce criticism from Israel and the Congress and avoiding a possible war with Iran. Also, the historic mending of relations with Cuba was also a significant success. But these came later in his second tenure which shows how long it took him to manage the pressure form other foreign policy actors.

CONCLUSION

When reviewing Obama's foreign policy, it can be seen that it is a mix of variation and continuity. Even though he has not been able to completely succeed in ending the War on Terror, he has somewhat given a new scope to it by using a leading from behind strategy. The general expectation when Obama took office was that there was going to be a significant change in US foreign policy but that was not the case. But then the question could be asked that how much influence did Obama really have on foreign policy? How much freedom did he have? Were there any limitations to his governance of foreign relations of the US? Was Obama restricted by the decisions made by the Bush administration?

In developing this, the debate on continuity can be constructed as a spectrum of political freedom. At one end of this spectrum is absolute agency; the idea that Obama's actions are what he intended all along. That despite any rhetoric of change, Obama never intended, or gave any indication, that foreign policy would differ substantially from that instigated by Bush in the wake of 9/11. Continuity is entirely Obama's will. At the other extreme, it has been argued that Bush created such a pervasive foreign policy that Obama is entrapped. Obama has been unable to break out of the policies, ideas and expectations associated with the "War on Terror". His presidency is defined entirely by the one that went before him.

By the time Obama came into office, though, the number of combat troops in Iraq was decreasing. The more pressing issue, according to both the Obama Administration and the Bush Administration towards the end, was Afghanistan. In the first few months of Obama's time in office, discussions centered on how to transfer troops from Iraq to Afghanistan, the proper number of troops to send to Afghanistan, and, by extension, how great the US's commitment to Afghanistan should be. While Iraq remained pertinent to US foreign policy in this time period, it lost much of the importance it possessed in the mid-2000s, with other regions taking Iraq's place at the forefront. The US-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement had been signed before Obama came to office; the Iraqi government wanted the United States out with backing from Iran. Obama's decision to withdraw and simultaneously adopt a limited response to the atrocities in Syria created and augmented political, ideological, and ultimately territorial space for ISIS.

The effects of Obama's policy rationale of "leading from behind" or, more accurately, leading from out of the public eye, has been particularly visible in the Middle East, where the upheavals of the Arab Spring have further destabilized an already conflict-ridden region. State and non-state actors have become direct or indirect US surrogates of war, providing security locally with limited direct US involvement. As a result, the role of the United States in the Middle East has been defined by absence, an absence particularly marked after two decades of direct engagement beginning with the First Gulf War. Regional partners have begun to question US superpower status, now that it seems unable to act as a global hegemon to influence outcomes in the region. While the United States remains a Great Power, including in the Middle East, it has reached the end of its hegemonic control in world affairs. America has shifted from being a guarantor of security or a protector to being a partner, assisting local surrogates to take over responsibility to provide security in their own backyard.

There have certainly been successes, none more so than the tracking down and killing of Osama Bin Laden on 2 May 2011. Obama has, therefore, been able to claim the greatest victory yet in Washington's "War on Terror", and one that had constantly eluded and frustrated his predecessor George W. Bush. By taking out the head of the terror network responsible for the 9/11 attacks, and the individual in whom the threat of international terrorism was so greatly personified, Obama may appear to have successfully insulated himself from any further criticism over his counterterrorism policies. Yet while the killing of Bin Laden drew substantial praise from across the political spectrum, the fault-lines over US counterterrorism policy run much deeper and Obama's problems in the face of the intractable problem of international terrorism remain great.

Despite the elimination of Bin Laden, overall the story of Obama's first term was one of hesitant change. There are at least three explanations to the distance between the apparent rhetoric of change in 2008 and what followed after. First, and most important, is the rhetoric of counterterrorism. Obama foreshadowed much of his programme in his pre-election speeches. Yet audiences were selective in what they heard – displaying a strange kind of psychological dissonance. Obama repeatedly promised to get tougher on America's "real" enemies in locations such as Pakistan, to deepen the war in Afghanistan and to improve intelligence – but the

audience was not listening, seeming to believe instead that Obama would draw back significantly from Bush's "War on Terror" once in the office.

Second, few have appreciated how much the Bush strategy was quietly modified in the last three years before Obama's accession. Partly under pressure from European allies and partly as a result of internal squabbles, there was a step change in strategic thinking during 2006 and 2007. In other words, Obama has adopted a counter-terrorism strategy that is late-Bush rather than early-Bush. He has introduced some significant changes of his own, but even these were in the spirit of the adaptations that were already on-going. Many of the things that Obama promised to fix were already being fixed in the last year of the Bush presidency such as the troop withdrawal agreement signed with the Iraqi government.

Finally, President Obama was not the change agent he was perceived to be in terms of foreign policy, but in fact, shares a similar viewpoint to his predecessor on the imperative of reducing the terrorist threat to the US. Inderjeet Parmar believes that Obama's 2010 National Security Strategy strongly echoes that of his predecessor (Parmar, 2011). Certainly, a close analysis of Obama's rhetoric since taking office demonstrates that he regularly expresses all the central elements of the George W. Bush "War on Terror" discourse, evidence that he was in fact, a true believer in it. According to Trevor McCrisken, from a psychological perspective, it can also be argued that the central narrative of "sacrifice" in presidential counterterrorism discourse, by Bush and Obama, may have constructed a "sacrifice trap" in which "staying the course" is necessary to justify previous sacrifices in lives and material (McCrisken, 2012). In effect, the "War on Terror" has to be continued under the Obama administration in order to avoid the perception that the lives lost thus far were wasted in a hopeless cause. In the end, Obama entered the White House at a time where the status and respect of the US was at its lowest among other countries due to the policies employed by George W. Bush. He strived to clean the mess by transforming the hard power of the US to soft power, moving out soldiers from Iraq and diverting them towards Afghanistan. This was followed by saving face in the form of important domestic measures as well as engaging international adversaries and giving a more tolerant image of the US. However, all his policies were not successful and in the case of terrorism his policy was considered similar to that of Bush.

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